

Ohio House Workforce and Higher Education Committee

Tuesday, May 6, 2025



Proponent Testimony: House Bill 98

Joseph Borchers, Director of the Office of Teaching and Learning, Miami County Educational Service Center

Chairman Young, Vice Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Piccolantonio, and members of the House Workforce and Higher Education Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 98. My name is Joseph Borchers, and I have the privilege of serving as the Director of the Office of Teaching and Learning at the Miami County Educational Service Center(ESC). I'm here today to express my support for this important legislation and to share how the work outlined in HB 98 aligns with the work already underway in Miami County to strengthen workforce pathways for our students.

In partnership with our local school districts, career centers, chambers of commerce, businesses, and community organizations, the Miami County ESC has been actively working to connect education to employment. Through our Business Advisory Council(BAC), we have focused on building sustainable systems that support workforce readiness and connect students directly with employers across our county.

Our Career Connections programming began just under two years ago, and our two Career Connections staff members have enabled the work of our BAC to come alive. This team includes our Career Navigator, a role embedded within several of our districts, who engages students in meaningful career exploration, job shadowing, hiring events, and individualized planning that leads to concrete employment outcomes right here in our communities. As she works with students she also supports the development of soft skills like communication, problem-solving, and time management. This hands-on work is supported by our Career Connections Coordinator, who helps align local workforce needs with school-based programming and employer engagement.

The work we are doing locally echoes the intent of HB 98—to establish structured, ESC-led programs that promote soft skill development, career awareness, and real-world job experiences. One notable achievement of our program has been streamlining the student interest and aptitude assessments across our county. Previously, there were five different assessments being used across our nine school districts. We have unified this process to a single, consistent assessment. This change has enhanced collaboration among schools, enabled us to provide more effective support, and allowed us to collect reliable, actionable data to guide our partnerships with the business community. In this school year alone, our work has positively impacted over 1,400 students across the nine districts we serve.

In addition, our recent strategic hiring event, led by our career connections team, brought together select Seniors from four of our school districts and local businesses who have current openings that align to their interests and aptitudes. It was powerful to witness these students—many of whom had once seen limited prospects for a meaningful career—now expressing genuine excitement and hope about real employment opportunities that offer a path for growth and advancement in our county. This event illustrates why ESCs are uniquely positioned to lead this work. Through our direct connection with every school district in the county, our ability to bridge the efforts of two career centers and four Chambers of Commerce, and maintain strong relationships with local employers through our BAC, we are able to provide robust support and meaningful results within our county.

While we have made significant strides, we recognize there is still much work to do.. One of the greatest challenges we face is funding. Our work has been sustained through a patchwork of contributions from districts, businesses, chambers, foundations, and other partners. While we are proud of this collaboration, it is not a stable or scalable model. The investment provided by HB 98 is vital in helping to solidify and expand this work, not only in Miami County, but across Ohio. This will ensure more students—regardless of ZIP code—have access to the career-connected learning opportunities that will prepare them for life after graduation.

Chairman Young, Vice-Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Piccolantonio, and members of the House Workforce and Higher Education Committee, on behalf of the Miami County ESC, thank you again for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 98. I welcome any questions you may have.