

May 6, 2025

The Honorable Tom Young
Ohio House Workforce & Higher Education Committee
1 Capitol Square
Columbus, OH 43215

RE: House Bill 98 (Establishing the Community Connectors Workforce Program)

Chair Young, Vice Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Piccolantonio, and members of the House Workforce and Higher Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 98, which would establish the Community Connectors Workforce Program.

The Ohio Business Roundtable is a statewide business association comprised of CEOs and Presidents of the top companies in the state. We currently have over 125 members, collectively employing over 600,000 Ohioans and generating revenue of more than \$2.5 trillion, which contributes significantly to Ohio's economy.

Our membership is inclusive of industry leading companies representing over 20 Ohio industries including—but not limited to—companies such as KeyBank and Huntington representing the banking sector; Cincinnati Financial and Nationwide in the insurance sector; Kokosing representing construction; CareSource, Cleveland Clinic, and many of Ohio's children's hospitals in healthcare; The Ohio State University and Miami University in higher education; The J.M. Smucker Company and Wendy's representing the food industry; Owens Corning, RPM International, Inc, and Proctor & Gamble in the manufacturing sector; AEP, Vistra Corp., and Marathon in energy and utilities, among others.

The Ohio Business Roundtable, and the members we represent, are focused on promoting the economic competitiveness of the state. We are all aware of the significant progress Ohio has made in recent years given several economic development wins. However, in order to fill the workforce demand these economic development projects will create, we must be able to retain students within the Buckeye State.



House Bill 98 establishes the Community Connectors Workforce Program, which is housed within the Department of Education. This program tasks Ohio's Education Service Centers with placing one, or up to three, directors in the high schools the ESC serves.

Under the bill, the directors must assist students with identifying jobs and internships in their area and guide them throughout the process by providing them with resume, interview and job performance skills necessary to succeed in their chosen field.

The Ohio Business Roundtable is a proponent of this legislation because we believe it will have a positive impact in three ways. The first is that it will provide high school students with important experience to help them determine if a career path is a good fit for them.

Second, this program will help connect Ohio businesses with internship talent that can fill entry-level workforce gaps.

Lastly, by connecting students with valuable opportunities within Ohio companies, the program will increase the likelihood of students remaining in the state following high school because of the connections they made during their internship.

Ultimately, Ohio must attract and retain more workforce talent in order to remain competitive in the future. The Community Connectors Workforce Program will strengthen the state's workforce by connecting students with meaningful opportunities right here in Ohio.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony.

Sincerely,

Alexandra Denney

Vice President, Government Relations & Communications
Ohio Business Roundtable