

**House Workforce and Higher Education Committee  
HB 98 Written Proponent Testimony  
Shannon Cox, Superintendent  
Montgomery County Educational Service Center  
May 6, 2025**

Good afternoon, Chair Young, Vice-Chair Ritter, Ranking Minority Member Piccolantonio, and members of the House Workforce and Higher Education Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of HB 98. I am Shannon Cox, the Montgomery County Educational Service Center (MCESC) superintendent. We serve the needs of the school districts and private schools (and their respective students) in 140 locations in 20 counties in Ohio.

I begin by thanking Representatives Santucci and Williams for sponsoring this critical legislation. We see connecting students with a variety of career opportunities as a vital component of their success and also a key ingredient to a strong economy. HB 98 would support a more intentional focus on this effort within Ohio's education system.

For many years, MCESC has been working toward increasing students' awareness of the workforce opportunities within our region. Through our facilitation of the Business Advisory Councils (BACs) required of area school districts, we strive to connect local businesses with students who might fulfill their workforce needs. Noting that MCESC's BAC has received a four-star rating for the last three years, HB 98 would assist us in expanding our reach in these efforts.

HB 98 would not just support efforts in Montgomery County. Its statewide application would allow ESCs around the state to place supports for workforce connections closer to where the students spend their time. To truly succeed in connecting students with workforce opportunities, it is essential to have individuals in place (directors under HB 98) whose job is to wake up every morning focused on this service. While some school districts may already have the resources to provide this service to students, many others do not.

Utilizing ESCs, the state's regional service providers, to manage this system of workforce connectors/directors makes sense for efficiency and effectiveness, particularly since many are already actively facilitating positive relationships between schools and businesses through local BACs, as we do at MCESC. HB 98 will complement and strengthen this ongoing work.

We urge the committee to favorably report HB 98 as soon as possible. Planning for the 2025-2026 school year is already underway, so the bill must move quickly to establish the community connectors for the next school year.

This concludes my written testimony. Please feel free to contact us with questions.