

Columbus City Schools STEM Industry Council is a collaborative volunteer organization that provides a career readiness program to STEM students attending Columbus City Schools. The program includes skills on professionalism, resume writing, conducting interviews, and developing elevators speeches. Upon completion of the career readiness program, students may participate in paid STEM internship opportunities. Recently, SInC has partnered with the Education Service Center of Central Ohio (ESSCO) to take advantage of the Department of Education High School Tech Internship Program to reimburse employers for hosting high school interns in technology-focused roles. Upon completion of SInC's program, students may qualify for the OhioMeansJobs Workforce Readiness Seal.

SInC's biggest challenges include funding an internship coordinator to assist in matching students with internship opportunities, funding a coach for the internship program to ensure interns and employers have a positive work experience, and funding collection of data from interns and employers regarding the program and potential improvements.

House Bill 98 will significantly enhance the impactful work of organizations like the SInC and its partners, including ESSCO and Columbus City Schools. HB 98's Community Connectors Workforce Program creates a structured framework for connecting students with meaningful career experiences, aligning closely with SInC's mission to bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world application. The bill's emphasis on dedicated program directors within schools that will coordinate with community partners, deliver targeted soft skills and professional training, and ensure robust reporting on student outcomes will amplify the reach and sustainability of programs like SInC's Summer Internship Program. Annual SInC reports consistently demonstrate that students participating in structured, employer-driven internships develop greater confidence, workplace skills, and career clarity, while employers value the pipeline of motivated, prepared talent. By formalizing these connections and providing stable funding, HB 98 will enable ESSCO, SInC, and Columbus City Schools to scale successful models, deepen employer engagement, and ensure equitable access to career readiness opportunities for all students. This legislation is a critical step toward building Ohio's more inclusive, responsive, and future-ready workforce.

