



House Workforce & Higher Education Committee

May 6, 2025

Testimony of Tom Goodney, Superintendent, ESC of Central Ohio

Chair Young, Vice Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Piccolantonio, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 98 today. My name is Tom Goodney, and I am Superintendent of the ESC of Central Ohio. Our ESC serves over 225,000 students in its member school districts and area career technical centers, while also providing direct services and supports to community schools, STEM schools, and chartered nonpublic schools, including catholic schools within Central Ohio and across the state. We also govern and co-administer the work of the Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence (or OCALI), the ESC – Council of Governments, the Central Ohio Business Advisory Council, and the State Support Team Region 11 in partnership with the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce.

The State Support Team is one of many initiatives we administer on behalf of the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce to bring needed improvement services and technical assistance to schools and students throughout the Central Ohio region. We have provided leadership for the Department of Education and Workforce on numerous initiatives related to content standards, student assessments, district and school-level data analysis, staff professional development, innovative learning models, school safety initiatives, college, career and workforce readiness programming, strategic staffing, and comprehensive shared services all with the underlying mission of strengthening our capacity so that we may serve others. Based on district and school needs, the ESC of Central Ohio has been increasing its capacity in career and workforce readiness supports, and for that reason, I'd like to provide proponent testimony in support of House Bill 98.

For over a decade now, our ESC has focused substantial resources and much of our effort and attention on helping all schools help their students make workforce connections with regional businesses and industry partners by serving as a founding member and co-convenor of the Central Ohio Compact. In addition, we are active participants in the STEM Industry Council (SInC), which supports the development of future engineers and STEM professionals from Columbus City Schools. We administer the Central Ohio Business Advisory Council, whose ultimate goal is to increase and enhance the dialogue between schools and business partners to ensure workforce preparedness and post-secondary career readiness of students. We have established processes and personnel support for schools to deliver effective career readiness opportunities with local businesses through internships, pre-apprenticeship programs, and work-based learning initiatives. These programs are seeing rapid growth in the Central Ohio region, and we look forward to continuing to enhance this growth further, especially in areas such as computer science and STEM.

The ESC of Central Ohio is committed to supporting the work of the state, its schools, its educators, and most importantly, its students as we look to emphasize their future opportunities to be educated, to work, and to thrive in the workforce here in Ohio. This is a vital component of our public purpose in federal and state policy.

I look forward to leading our ESC as we grow our impact in these areas in partnership with the state, and House Bill 98 would be an important step toward supporting this growth.

Chair Young, thank you for this opportunity to offer written testimony, and I would be happy to meet with any of you to answer questions and discuss the work of the ESC of Central Ohio.