

LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY TEMPLATE #1: Student Opportunity & Exposure

Ohio Senate Education Committee HB96 – Biennial Budget

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony for HB96. I respectfully submit this testimony in support of restoring the Executive Budget's proposed funding and policy for Career Awareness, Exploration, and Development. As a career-technical administrator, I witness daily the difference it makes when students are introduced early to the idea that their education is connected to their future. This funding is not supplemental—it is foundational. It creates structure and access for students to explore meaningful career paths that align with their skills, interests, and goals.

Career Awareness, Exploration, and Development funding plays a critical role in helping students discover purpose, identify potential pathways, and stay engaged in their education. The ability to explore careers in a structured, supported way helps students make informed decisions about their coursework, high school programming, and postsecondary plans. These opportunities often begin with simple but powerful moments: visiting a job site, engaging in a hands-on project, interacting with an employer, or participating in a classroom activity linked to a real-world career. With this funding, those moments are accessible to more students, more often.

Our school district has leveraged the funding to expand access to experiential learning opportunities that directly benefit our future students. For example, over 500 sixth-grade students participated in our 6th grade tours and hands on day this year. The funding supported transportation, field guides, hands-on materials in the labs, and take away items such as what they created or tools for the trade. As a result, students engaged in real-world lab activities, including all 14 program labs.

Anecdotal feedback from teachers and families has been overwhelmingly positive. Many students reported positive feedback toward a future in one of our programs.

This initiative aligns perfectly with the goals of our 6th-grade by enriching student experiences beyond the classroom and fostering future growth in our programs.

This funding has allowed us to create meaningful, hands-on learning experiences that directly impacts future students across our district.

A highlight was a dedicated hands-on day for 6th graders to engage with each program area—giving them the opportunity to explore potential career pathways in a tangible and exciting way. Students rotated through interactive stations led by CTE students and industry partners, trying activities in fields like culinary arts, healthcare, welding, auto and many others.

This initiative aligns exceptionally well with our 6th grade students and the use of Career Awareness and Exploration Funding dollars generously provided by the State.

These initiatives foster student engagement, build self-confidence, and develop a sense of purpose.

From a policy perspective, investing in early career development supports Ohio's broader education and workforce goals. Students who engage in structured exploration are more likely to stay on track, pursue credentials of value, and find success beyond high school. National data shows that early alignment between student interests and career pathways increases completion rates and postsecondary outcomes.¹

This work is also a workforce strategy. Helping students identify their strengths and interests earlier helps fill pipelines into high-demand fields such as health care, cybersecurity, education, advanced manufacturing, and construction. Without this funding, the opportunities to make those connections—especially in underserved districts—are significantly diminished.

Sustaining the Executive Budget's investment ensures that students across Ohio continue to benefit from consistent, high-quality exploration experiences. It ensures that we don't lose the momentum schools have worked hard to build.

Restoring this funding is a commitment to students, to communities, and to the future of Ohio's workforce.

I would welcome the opportunity to serve as a resource as you continue to consider this important investment. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or for additional information.

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