

**RE: Ohio Senate Education Committee; Testimony on State Operating Budget (HB 96);
Restoration of Career Awareness Funding**

SUBMITTED BY: Michelle Patrick, Superintendent, Springfield-Clark Career Technology Center

DATE: May 2, 2025

Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding the importance of restoring career awareness funding in House Bill 96.

My name is Michelle Patrick and as Superintendent of the Springfield-Clark Career Technology Center (CTC), I am writing to urge you to restore career awareness funding in HB 96. The Springfield-Clark CTC serves seven (7) main public schools, one stem school, and a variety of parochial, private, and homeschool students in Clark County, Ohio. Within our setting, I have witnessed firsthand the transformational impact that early career exploration has on the students within our CTPD's reach. Career awareness initiatives not only introduce students to future opportunities—they ignite purpose and possibility.

In recent years, because of Career Awareness funding, the Springfield-Clark CTC has built a robust set of programs aimed at engaging K–12 students in career exploration:

- **Career Kits:** These engaging, hands-on kits span 15 career pathways and are tailored for grades K–8. In the 2022-23 school year, we distributed 2,096 kits. This number nearly tripled in 2023-24, with 6,122 kits distributed. We are on track to surpass 6,500 kits by the end of this summer. Parents access these kits. School districts access these kits. And the public library has begun to feature them within its setting. These kits don't just provide a glimpse into a pathway, they become a point of discussion and inspiration between adults and young people around the importance of discovering new career-based concepts. In fact, through multiple state and national presentations, school districts all over the country are replicating SCCTC's career kits! With restored funding, we will be able to differentiate the contents of the current pathway kits and continue to create more. For more information, please visit: [SCCTC.org/kits](https://scctc.org/kits)
- **Summer Career Camps:** These camps give students in grades 5-8 an immersive experience into career pathways. They are a week of fun, discovery, and hands-on learning about careers. Because of career awareness funding, we have been able to grow the sessions and offer this opportunity to more and more students each year. Participation has grown from 8 sessions and 67 campers in 2023; to 9 sessions and 112 campers in 2024; and this year we have 23 sessions and over 200 campers expected in 2025. This is not happening in isolation. We are partnering with Junior Achievement, Clark State College, Springfield City Schools, Ohio College Tech Prep,

and so many sponsors from both the business and local community. With restored funding, this will only continue to grow this healthy outlet for summer programming. For more information, please visit: SCCTC.org/Camp

- **Tour & Explore Events:** These provide structured visits to our campus for K–7 students. More than 630 elementary students visited during the 2024-25 school year as we began these events. Our goal is to expand them to occur monthly around career-based themes such as a Cosmetology-based day called ‘New Year, New You;’ an Air Transportation-based event called ‘Aviation Tour & Explore’ and so much more. Restored funding will allow us to grow these offerings in content, richness, and frequency!
- **Future Ready Fridays:** Future Ready Fridays offer to bring students and career professionals together to address the whole child. These sessions focus on students in grades 10-12 who attend the Springfield-Clark CTC. They continue their coursework while experiencing something they otherwise may not have the opportunity to experience. Why? Because career exploration does not stop here. Every student deserves to feel connected, healthy, safe, engaged, challenged, and supported. To date, career awareness funding has allowed us to conduct 492+ sessions with over 6,745 student participants.

These programs are not theoretical—they are making a difference. As one local librarian shared, *“I know that these career awareness kits have led to community involvement and excitement about the CTC. I have had discussions with kiddos about the career path they would choose and what their future plans would look like because of these kits.”*

Our summer campers rated their experience a **9.21 out of 10** for both learning and fun. These are the types of results that build a future-ready workforce and support Ohio’s long-term economic vitality.

Cutting this funding now would reverse critical progress. Career awareness programming:

- Increases student engagement and retention,
- Informs academic and career planning,
- Bridges gaps in access to opportunity,
- And builds, maintains, and encourages critical partnerships with families, schools, and employers.

On behalf of the importance of workforce development, I urge you to restore this vital investment. When we reach students early and often, we light the path toward skilled, fulfilling careers. We begin the conversations about current and emerging careers. Career awareness is not a luxury—it is foundational to workforce readiness and student success.

Thank you for your consideration and continued support of Ohio’s career technical education programs.

Sincerely,
Michelle R. Patrick
Superintendent
Springfield-Clark Career Technology Center