



Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide this written, interested party testimony on House Bill 96, the State Operating Budget. My name is Tom Goodney, and I am the Superintendent of the ESC of Central Ohio. Our ESC serves over 225,000 students in its client 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. Our ESC has been a long-standing partner with both the Department of Education and Workforce and the Ohio Legislature in policymaking and implementation. As this committee deliberates the education sections of the biennial budget, I would ask that you keep the work of the ESC of Central Ohio in mind, as we have worked towards the same goals of supporting and preparing all schools to ensure the focus is on students and their academic and post-academic success.

Our ESC, as directed by the legislature and administration over 17 years ago, governs and co-administers the work of the Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence (OCALI). OCALI uses data, research, and evidence-based strategies to shape policy and practice designed to promote access for people with disabilities. When we promote access and independence, people are able to grow, learn, and live their best lives. OCALI is not just an Ohio resource, but a nationally and internationally recognized resource for students, families, educators, and other professionals working with students and adult learners with autism and low incidence. This work is vital and has made Ohio a leader in this space. For these reasons, we hope that you will support ensuring the continuation of this work and the primary consideration of OCALI as a state resource.

For over a decade, our ESC has focused substantial resources and much 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-convener of the Central Ohio Compact. 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 advanced manufacturing.

During the 133<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly, the ESC of Central Ohio was tasked by the legislature to develop what became the Tutor Ohio Kids program. This program stemmed from concerns of learning and literacy issues as Ohio came out of the pandemic, a directed effort by Governor DeWine and the legislature to focus on the Science of Reading, and an acknowledgment that many Ohio students needed, and continue to need, high quality, high dosage tutoring in reading, language arts, and mathematics. As the program was funded through ESSER/ARPA monies, and now recently those late liquidation dollars were not reapproved by the US Department of Education, I would encourage this body to work with the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce to advocate for and invest in this program and, more importantly, the students it has served. The infrastructure and expertise that the ESC of Central Ohio has created and developed with other ESCs, districts, schools, and individuals willing to be tutors have resulted in nearly 200 currently active tutors providing services to over 350 students in districts and schools throughout the state.



Lastly, during the 134<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, the ESC of Central Ohio, along with the Montgomery County ESC, was tasked with implementing and operating a small transportation pilot program. The goal of this program was to alleviate some of the pressure points felt by districts for students who experience significant transportation-related challenges. The ESC of Central Ohio is currently transporting about 60 students through a mix of ESC-owned and contracted vans to the Graham Family of Schools in Columbus. This pilot program has also helped the ESC of Central Ohio to think creatively and innovate in response to client districts and schools, providing a new rapid response service. For emergency student placement situations, school districts are able to call the day before transportation is needed, and the ESC will transport the student the next day. We are currently operating this program with several school districts in the region.

As the House has once again invested in the Montgomery County ESC transportation pilot program, we ask the Senate to support the ESC of Central Ohio's transportation pilot program and the students that this program has served and will continue to serve.

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, through continued investment and collaboration in House Bill 96 and beyond. Chair Brenner and members of the committee, 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.