



North Canton City Schools

All students prepared for tomorrow

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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 education administrator, I witness the difference it makes when students are introduced 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. In addition, this funding allows schools to bridge the gap between classroom learning and workforce expectations. Career Awareness, Exploration, and Development funding also empowers schools to build and strengthen local partnerships between schools, businesses, and community organizations. The ability to explore careers in a structured, supported way helps students make informed decisions about their coursework, high school programming, and postsecondary plans.

We have seen a dramatic increase in students pursuing true work-based learning experiences since these funds have been implemented. In 2021-2022, we saw students cumulatively record about 11,615 work-based learning hours. This is before we hired a career awareness coordinator. As of the beginning of May 2025, students have recorded over 30,550 hours of work-based learning experiences. We have nearly tripled the amount of work-based learning hours recorded. This is just for our one high school.

This increase in hours has strengthened our relationship with local businesses and organizations. We have formed relationships with local entities that we may have never fostered before. Now, have an individual who can focus efforts on connecting students to employment opportunities.

We have hosted an Opportunity Fair for the past three years. This allows our students, and students from nearby schools, to visit with local employers. In 2025, we had over 600 students and 80 community partners register to attend our fair.



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We have also participated in several career exploration activities. Our middle school students have been exposed to more local careers through a career awareness event. Underclass high school students have learned interviewing and resume writing tips. Finally, upperclass high school students have visited several local employers to get a firsthand look at career opportunities. These partnerships provide real-world experiences that shape students' understanding of what is possible.

Investing in early career development supports Ohio's broader education and workforce goals, ensures students are better prepared for Ohio careers, and helps local economies thrive. National data shows that early alignment between student interests and career pathways increases completion rates and postsecondary outcomes.¹

Sustaining the Executive Budget's investment ensures that students across Ohio continue to benefit from consistent, high-quality work-based experiences. 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.

Rob White

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¹ Ohio Excels, *Reality Check: The State of Education in Ohio*, 2024.