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Ohio Senate Education Committee

House Bill 96: Career Awareness Funding

Proponent Testimony from Matt Sheridan, Superintendent,
Mid-East Career and Technology Centers

May 2, 2025

Good afternoon Chair Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee.

My name is Matt Sheridan, and I serve as the Superintendent of the Mid-East Career and Technology Centers (MECTC). Thank you for the opportunity to offer proponent written testimony regarding the significant impact Career Awareness Funding has had on our district.

MECTC serves high school juniors and seniors from 13 partner school districts across Muskingum, Guernsey, Noble, and Perry counties in Southeast Ohio. Our combined enrollment at two campuses has steadily increased post-pandemic and currently stands at 1,125 students. While overall population and K-12 enrollment in our Appalachian region continue to decline, enrollment at MECTC continues to grow. On average, one-third of all juniors and seniors from our partner schools attend MECTC. We offer 33 career-technical programs, with Welding and Multi-Skilled Health Technologies available at both campuses.

During my five-year tenure as superintendent, we've not only sustained our career awareness efforts across our partner schools but expanded them significantly. At the beginning of each school year, we hold a kickoff meeting with partner school principals and counselors, where we provide each district with a tailored overview of the career exploration activities we deliver specifically for their students. These activities differ by year and district but consistently exceed the funding we receive.

At the elementary level, we employ a staff member dedicated solely to career awareness. Her activities include "Chalk on the Walks," "Touch a Truck," "Community Puzzles," field trips to our campuses, classroom visits by our students, and participation in partner school career days, among others. At the middle school level, we host career days, fund eighth-grade visits to our campuses, and deploy two additional staff members to administer career interest surveys and provide individualized career guidance. These staff members also coordinate sophomore field trips and oversee multiple recruitment and retention initiatives.

Thanks to the Career Awareness Funding and an ODEW Community Partnership Grant, we launched an innovative program called Careers in My Community (CiMC) for elementary students. Over six months, we collaborated with community partners and schools to develop a hands-on career exploration curriculum aligned with English and math standards. Two years ago, we hired a facilitator to deliver this six-week program in elementary schools, rotating much like music, art, or physical education classes. The curriculum focuses on five key career fields—Agriculture, Transportation, Health Care, Construction, and Manufacturing—and includes hands-on projects and guest visits from local employers.

Due to the program's overwhelming success, we hired a second facilitator and will serve ten elementary schools next year. This work is especially vital in our region, where generational poverty often limits children's exposure to career possibilities. CiMC introduces students to high-demand, living-wage jobs within our local communities—jobs that can allow them to remain in and contribute to our region as adults.



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Career Awareness Funding is critical to the continuation and expansion of this programming. While we currently receive \$232,000 annually through this funding, our actual expenditures far exceed that amount. Both ODEW and legislators consistently emphasize the importance of introducing students to careers at an earlier age. We are doing exactly that—successfully—and our partner schools and families strongly support these efforts.

I invite any member of this committee to visit and observe our CiMC program firsthand or to speak directly with one of our facilitators.

Thank you for your continued support of Career-Technical Education. I respectfully urge you to restore Career Awareness Funding in the Senate's version of the budget so we may continue preparing our students—and our region—for a brighter economic future.

Your partner in education,

Matt Sheridan
Superintendent

