

## **LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY TEMPLATE #2: Building Ohio's Workforce**

### **Ohio Senate Education Committee HB96 – Biennial Budget**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony for HB96. I respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of restoring the Executive Budget's proposed funding and policy for Career Awareness, Exploration, and Development. As a career-technical educator, I know that introducing students to career opportunities early is essential to addressing Ohio's workforce needs and preparing students for lifelong success.

Career Awareness, Exploration, and Development funding allows schools to bridge the gap between classroom learning and workforce demand. Students must see a clear connection between their education and their future opportunities. Through hands-on career exploration experiences, exposure to local industries, and access to career development resources, students build the skills, confidence, and knowledge they need to pursue high-demand careers in Ohio.

These funds have provided us with the opportunity to support career camps for grades 2-8. We have incorporated YouScience to help guide students in grades 9-12 as they prepare for their future course planning and careers. We have strengthened our connections with local businesses by connecting students with Junior Achievement and career fairs for our high school students. These efforts ensure students leave school ready to meet the needs of Ohio's growing economy.

Research shows that early career engagement helps students stay on track academically and increases credential and postsecondary completion rates.<sup>1</sup> By investing early, we not only prepare students for individual success but also help meet Ohio's pressing workforce challenges.

This is a critical moment. Sustained investment will allow schools to continue developing students who are #NEXTready—prepared to succeed in Ohio's competitive economy. Losing this funding would disrupt the partnerships and momentum that communities have worked hard to build.

I respectfully urge you to restore the Executive Budget's funding for Career Awareness, Exploration, and Development to ensure that students across Ohio are prepared to power our workforce and our future.

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.

Thom Ziems

Associate Principal, Career Technical Education

Whitmer High School and Whitmer Career and Technology Center

[tziems@wls4kids.org](mailto:tziems@wls4kids.org)

---

<sup>1</sup> Ohio Excels, *Reality Check: The State of Education in Ohio*, 2024.