

Expanding Access for All Students

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 have seen how critical it is that students from all backgrounds and communities have access to early career exposure and planning.

Career Awareness, Exploration, and Development funding provides the structure and support needed to bring high-quality career exploration activities to all students, including those in smaller districts, rural areas, and underserved communities. Without this investment, many students would simply not have the chance to discover pathways that match their skills, interests, and goals.

Lima City Schools is using Career Awareness, Exploration, and Development dollars to support a career advising program called Xello. Xello helps students develop their interests and aptitudes and then advises them on schooling, trade schools, or the careers that match their interests and aptitudes.

Through this funding, we have been able to offer Career Advising at a much younger level, starting in Kindergarten. We are also able to get better information for our Special Education, Non-Traditional, and ELL students. We are able to offer Middle School career tech offerings, which we were unable to, and signed the no longer existent MS waiver before. These experiences create a foundation for lifelong learning and success.

Research shows that early, consistent exposure to career pathways helps students stay engaged, graduate on time, and pursue additional education or credentialing.¹ Ensuring every student has access to these experiences, regardless of where they live, is vital to Ohio's future workforce and economy.

I urge the committee to restore the Executive Budget's proposed funding so that students in every corner of Ohio can explore possibilities, unlock their potential, and build a future that is right for them.

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.

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