



**Ohio Senate Finance Committee**

**Interested Party Testimony**

**HB 96 – FY26-27 State Operating Budget**

**Dr. Annalies Corbin, Founder and CEO, PAST Foundation**

**May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

Chairman Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and Members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on House Bill 96, in support of PAST Foundation's amendment which would appropriate \$500,000 in each fiscal year through the Ohio Department of Education's Educator Preparation appropriation line for the **STEM Educator Workforce Collaborative**. This investment, expected to impact over 321,000 Ohio students, plays a critical role in bridging the gap between K-12 education, workforce demands, and industry partnerships across Ohio's schools and districts. Our work ensures that educational efforts align directly with the evolving needs of Ohio's economy, providing educators with the tools and experiences necessary to prepare students for high-demand STEM careers.

*STEM Educator Workforce Collaborative*—The STEM Educator Workforce Collaborative is a proven, strategic initiative that addresses Ohio's urgent need for highly skilled STEM educators who are connected to local industries. By immersing teachers in real-world, industry-driven experiences-ranging from advanced manufacturing to healthcare and technology, we equip them to deliver relevant, hands-on instruction that engages students and builds clear career pathways within their communities.

This Collaborative does more than offer professional development—it connects teachers directly to the industries that surround their districts. Through hands-on, problem-based learning grounded in real-world relevance, we upskill educators to bring local workforce needs into the classroom. The result: students who see purpose in their learning, pathways in their communities, and futures worth staying for.

With your investment, we can:

- Empower STEM educators with immersive experiences in industries such as advanced manufacturing, energy, healthcare, tech, and logistics.
- Translate those experiences into classroom instruction that sparks student engagement and success.
- Create regional talent pipelines that retain both students and teachers in our home districts.

- And deliver measurable outcomes in workforce readiness, student retention, and economic development.

The PAST Foundation is a non-profit provider of STEM education and workforce development. PAST stands for “Partnering Anthropology with Science and Technology,” and was formed in 2000 to improve education by linking learning to real life through hands-on, student-centered activities and instruction. In close collaboration with industry partners, PAST helps communities design experiences, internship programs, pathway programs, and mentoring opportunities that, over 25 years, have allowed more than 3.2 million students to develop skills necessary for a successful career in a high-demand STEM field.

Ohio is winning when it comes to attracting industry. But if we don’t match that momentum with strategic investment in education, we risk building opportunity without the workforce to fill it.

The STEM Educator Workforce Collaborative, funded by this Legislature over the last three biennia, is a proven model with measurable results:

- 574 educators across 39 counties, 119 school districts, and 221 schools have been trained;
- Over 36,000 students have been directly impacted through real-world, career-connected instruction.
- The program has enabled more than 152,600 STEM learning experiences for students, and that number continues to grow.
- Educators are earning industry-recognized credentials—in one or more of the following areas: Drone Pilot License (FAA Part 107), Lean 6 Sigma Yellow Belt, Lean 6 Sigma Green Belt, Certified SolidWorks Associate, Entrepreneurship & Small Business, Leadership Excellence, CompTIA Fundamentals, CompTIA A+, CompTIA Network+, and CompTIA Security+.

Ohio’s industries are growing rapidly, but without aligning education and workforce development, we risk a critical mismatch between job opportunities and qualified talent. The Collaborative is Ohio’s only scalable platform that effectively links educators, students, and industry to close this gap and build a future-ready workforce.

The continued funding will address the waiting lists of educators who want to participate in the program, as well as the following new components of PAST’s STEM Educator Workforce Collaborative:

- Educators Attain Industry Recognized Credentials: Teacher development will occur through a fellowship approach that enables teachers to attain an industry recognized credential (IRC) based upon regional workforce needs, which in turn prepares them to teach those skills to the emerging workforce.
- PortfoliOH Tool: In partnership with StartSOLE, PAST Foundation will launch PortfoliOH, a tool students will use to capture their progress in work-based learning experiences, career technical education, and College Credit Plus as aligned to regional in-demand jobs. Any learner can then use their PortfoliOH to document and track work-based learning experiences, credentials, and graduation Seal attainment, and valuable interactions with employers, educators, and mentors, which signal workforce readiness. The PortfoliOH will be interoperable with college and career planning tools, such as Transeo and Common App, and real-life career platforms including LinkedIn, Indeed, and Handshake.
- Advanced Manufacturing, IT, and Telecommunications Pathways: PAST and its partners will assist K-12 school districts in regions across Ohio to develop talent in Advanced Manufacturing pathways (AMp), Information Technology (IT), and Telecommunications (T), or **AMp-ITT-up**. These in-demand pathways are Ohio's fastest-growing industry clusters, and offerings are rare in the state's rural and urban education environments.
- Microschool Implementation: offers an innovative strategy for school districts that lack sufficient student numbers to independently launch specialized programs. By combining and sharing resources across multiple districts and educational partners, microschools enable access to high-quality, themed learning experiences that would otherwise be out of reach. The Early IT Microschool, powered by the PAST Foundation in partnership with the University of Cincinnati, exemplifies this collaborative approach. In this model, districts such as Grandview Heights (small suburban), Metro Schools (urban STEM), Horizon Science Academy (community school), and Upper Arlington (suburban) join forces with higher education and industry partners to create a shared educational ecosystem. Students from these diverse settings participate in an integrated curriculum that blends high school and college-level IT coursework, offers mentorships and internships with local professionals, and provides pathways to industry-recognized credentials and degrees. This partnership not only maximizes efficiency and reduces costs through resource pooling but also ensures equitable access to advanced career pathways for students regardless of their district's size or location, demonstrating the powerful potential of microschools to close opportunity gaps and meet workforce demands across Ohio
- Stewardship of State Resources: This investment will ensure strategic, in-demand career training opportunities for teachers in STEM fields and hands-on experiences for students at a per-student cost of only \$10.71.

At the heart of this work is the PAST Foundation's mission of **Linking Learning to Life**. Through our teacher training programs, we're helping students understand not just what career paths exist, but how to get there. Whether it's a skilled trade certification, an associate degree, or a four-year program, we're building bridges to lifelong opportunity.

We also ensure that students in rural Ohio are connected to businesses both large and small, giving them early exposure to career options that are meaningful, local, and attainable.

The PAST Foundation plays a critical role in bridging the gap between K-12 education, workforce demands, and industry partnerships across Ohio's schools and districts. Our work ensures that educational efforts align directly with the evolving needs of Ohio's economy, providing educators with the tools and experiences necessary to prepare students for high-demand STEM careers. Without continued support, we risk losing the only statewide model proven to connect teachers, students, and industry in ways that create a future-ready workforce.

My written testimony includes a table sharing our projections and impact to date (Table 1), in addition to a map with PAST Foundation's impact across Ohio (Figure 1).

Thank you for the opportunity to share with you an update on our work and details on our budget amendment. We look forward to continuing our partnership with the Ohio General Assembly.

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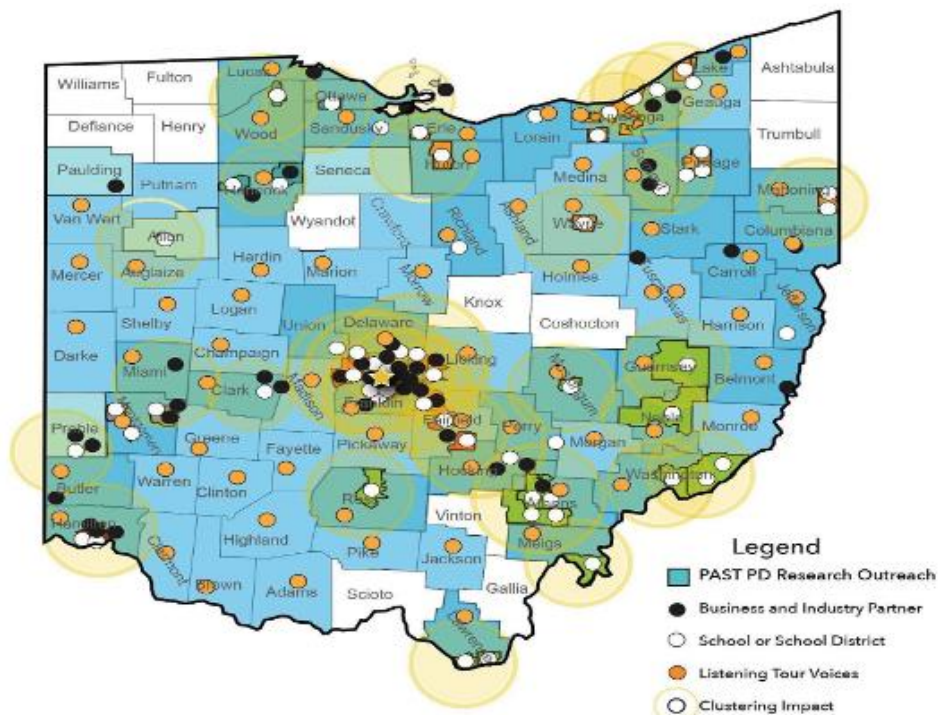
### PAST Foundation - STEM Educator Workforce Collaborative

Projected impact	FY22	FY23	FY24	Projection FY25	Projection FY26	Projection FY27	IMPACT TOTALS
Educators	69	174	193	250	375	400	<b>1,461</b>
<u>Student Impact</u>	12,075	30,450	33,775	43,750	65,625	70,000	<b>255,675</b>
Educational Leaders	30	75	125	150	200	200	<b>780</b>
Projected Program Cost per Student	<b>\$20.70</b>	<b>\$8.21 *</b>	<b>\$14.80</b>	<b>\$11.43</b>	<b>\$11.43</b>	<b>\$10.71</b>	
Projected Program Cost per Teacher	<b>\$2,525</b>	<b>\$1,004 *</b>	<b>\$1,572</b>	<b>\$1,250</b>	<b>\$1,304</b>	<b>\$1,250</b>	

\*FY23 included a one-time philanthropic donation that offset half of the costs. □

(Table 1)

**Impact of Previous Funding:** Thanks to prior state investments, PAST Foundation maintains a substantial presence across the State of Ohio and leverages partners to increase the impact of its work. An additional state investment is sure to amplify the reach of the organization and its partners. The map below denotes the presence of the organization's full set of partnerships.



(Figure 1)