

Ohio Senate Finance Committee
Interested Party Testimony
HB 96 – FY26-27 State Operating Budget

Dr. Emily Jablonka, Chief Academic Officer, Hamilton Local Schools

Chairman Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

My name is Emily Jablonka, and I am the Chief Academic Officer of the Hamilton Local School District in Obetz, Ohio. I am honored to share how the STEM Educator Workforce Collaborative has transformed our district's workforce development efforts and enriched our community.

Hamilton Local serves a diverse population of over 3,100 students, with Hamilton Township High School, with approximately 60% qualifying for free or reduced lunch. The mission of Hamilton Local School District in Ohio is "Every Ranger, Every Reason, Every Day." This mission emphasizes the district's commitment to educating every student, supporting every staff member, and serving the entire community every day. The focus is on providing a well-rounded, complete education tailored to each student, preparing them for success after graduation-whether they choose to enroll in further education, enlist in the military, or enter the workforce. The district is committed to bridging opportunity gaps through innovative, industry-aligned programming through the STEM Educator Workforce Collaborative..

The Collaborative, powered by the PAST Foundation, helps us create pathways that truly link learning to life beyond K-12 education. It has been instrumental in launching several of our workforce pathways, including a robust IT pathway where students earn industry-recognized credentials such as the CompTIA Foundations, Cybersecurity, and A+ certification, preparing them for entry-level roles in computer support, technical troubleshooting, and IT operations. Our district is proud to be the home of Google's new South Columbus data center campus, located just minutes from our schools. Google has made a \$2.3 billion investment in Central Ohio this year alone, bringing its total regional investment to \$6.7 billion since 2019. The new data center is a cornerstone of digital infrastructure, supporting innovations in cloud computing, artificial intelligence, and digital services.

Additionally, we are excited for our planned launch of the Early IT Microschool in partnership with the University of Cincinnati and PAST Foundation in the 2026-27 school year. This innovative program will allow our students to earn both high school and college credit simultaneously, completing their first year of an undergraduate IT program while still in high school. Through this partnership, students will have access to mentorships, internships, and industry-recognized credentials, directly preparing them for high-demand IT careers and guaranteeing college admission to competitive programs for those who qualify.

Our third pathway is focused on drone technology through the FAA Part 107 Remote Pilot Certification, which equips students with skills needed for careers in military, construction, transportation, and energy sectors involving drone operation and aerial data collection. These distinct pathways provide students with clear, credentialed routes into high-demand fields, supported by real-world, problem-based learning experiences that connect classroom

instruction to workforce needs. Our partnership opportunities will expand significantly with the Anduril Industries Arsenal-1 manufacturing facility, opening adjacent to our district in July 2026. This \$1 billion hyperscale plant, located near Rickenbacker Air Force Base, will produce autonomous defense systems like the Fury Collaborative Combat Aircraft and create over 4,000 advanced manufacturing jobs by 2035. Proximity to this cutting-edge facility enables us to:

- Integrate drone technology and FAA Part 107 training into our IT and advanced manufacturing pathways.
- Develop internships and mentorships with Anduril engineers, connecting students to real-world applications of STEM skills.
- Align curriculum with the Air Force Research Lab's needs at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, fostering talent for Ohio's growing defense sector.

Through problem-based learning approaches, students engage in hands-on projects like 360-degree site mapping and autonomous system design experiences that directly correlate with regional workforce demands. Educators trained via the Collaborative have brought these competencies into classrooms, resulting in a 22% increase in STEM course enrollment and a 15% rise in industry credential attainment since 2024.

The Collaborative's impact helps our district's assistance to students for their future success go beyond academics. By linking students to employers like Anduril and regional logistics firms, we are building a sustainable talent pipeline that retains graduates in central Ohio. This synergy between education and industry not only addresses workforce shortages but also elevates our community's economic vitality, ensuring Obetz remains competitive in advanced manufacturing and defense innovation.

In conclusion, the STEM Educator Workforce Collaborative is a linchpin for Ohio's future. We urge your support for continued funding to sustain these transformative partnerships and expand access to high-skill, high-wage opportunities for all students.

Thank you for your commitment to Ohio's educators, learners, and communities.

Emily Jablonka
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