

Chairman Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Ohio Senate Finance Committee, thank you for allowing me to present proponent testimony for proposed Amendment SCO521 to Substitute House Bill 96.

My name is Kyla Fallis, and I'm a senior at Bath High School (Lima). I'm here today because I've seen firsthand how the Academy's programs change student's lives. Not just academically, but in their confidence and career.

I've always loved science. My dad is the principal of a STEM school, so growing up, birthdays meant science kits with my toys. I started participating in science fair in fifth grade and kept going through middle school. But once I got to high school, I realized I wouldn't be able to do science fair any longer, because there were no competitions in my area for me to qualify.

Ohio is a large and diverse state, but not every district has equal access to advanced science programming. Where I'm from, it's not unusual for STEM-inclined students to graduate without ever stepping foot in a lab outside of class, or without knowing that things like science fairs, summer research, or innovation grants even exist. That's the reality I faced. And if it weren't for the Ohio Academy of Science, I might have accepted that as a limit instead of a challenge.

I missed this part of my life so much that my junior year, I found a way to compete on my own. Two years later, I'm representing Ohio at the International Science and Engineering Fair. Knowing the amount of work I had to do to get to this point makes it all the more worthwhile.

But none of that would've happened without the support of the Ohio Academy of Science. Science Day, BSEF, and Ohio STEP didn't just give me a platform to present my research. They helped me find my voice. I learned how to write technically, speak professionally, and lead confidently. I've received scholarships through these programs that I'm able to afford in-state college. Additionally, I've had the chance to try multiple different scientific fields with my research, microbiology, medicine, soil quality, and renewable energy resources, all before graduating.

These programs don't just prepare students for the next test. They prepare us for the next generation of jobs. They build Ohio's technical workforce. They take students from underfunded schools, where they don't have many opportunities—like mine—and show them that innovation and science is something they can do outside of their day-to-day education.

Ohio's future in science and engineering starts here, with students like me, and the opportunities OAS provides. Supporting this funding is a commitment to keeping our future in innovation and problem-solving right here in Ohio, where we need them most.

Please support the inclusion of the proposed Amendment SCO521 to Substitute House Bill 96.

Respectfully,
Kyal Fallis, Lima Ohio