

Chairman Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, and ranking member Hicks-Hudson and members of the Ohio Senate Finance Committee. My name is Wyatt Vick from Chillicothe, Ohio and I am a first-year undergraduate student pursuing a mechanical engineering degree at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). I am grateful for this opportunity to express my support for the programs run by the Ohio Academy of Science and to share my story as it pertains to those programs.

The Ohio state science fair program and its climax, State Science Day, provide thousands of students from schools of all sizes with a unique opportunity to perform independent, research-based work, that spans across a wide range of fields. Ohio STEP and the State Science Days also provide financial incentives for students to pursue excellence through their research and provide many with the financial means to further pursue a career in STEM through secondary education.

The State Science Day program was a major factor in my desire to pursue a career in research. It also opened many doors for me and made this career a real possibility. Fifth grade science fair in 2017 was the first time that I was presented with a project in which I could do anything that I wanted. This was a liberating and exciting experience, and I was hooked. From fifth grade to senior year, I completed science fair projects with my partner Charley Clyne, and we managed to qualify for the State Science Fair competition every time, which I view as my greatest academic accomplishment.

The experiences and achievements from the Science Fair played a large part in my acceptance to MIT. The programs managed by the Ohio Academy of Science are easy to become passionate about. This is why they are significant. Students genuinely care about their projects because this is one of the few opportunities that they get to fully take charge of a situation, either find a problem or ask a question, and then come up with their own solutions or answers. With the support of caring teachers and the existence of programs like State Science Day, these solutions and answers regularly change schools, communities, and could change the world.

In college, I regularly exercise skills that I developed through my participation in Ohio Academy of Science programs. From speaking to academic professionals, to presenting plans during design reviews at meetings of the MIT Solar Electric Vehicle Team, to tackling complicated, multi-step problems, I use those skills almost daily.

We are living in a rapidly changing educational environment. Programs like State Science Day and Ohio STEP are vital for students who are passionate about STEM. They are given a platform to demonstrate their skills beyond the classroom. Students participating in Ohio Academy of Science programs will think critically about real problems affecting the people

around them and take action to solve them as long as these programs are still available to provide the proper guidance that I was lucky enough to receive during my education.

Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to provide proponent testimony and request the inclusion of proposed Amendment SCO521 as part of Substitute House Bill 96.

Sincerely,

Wyatt Vick,
Zane Trace HS (2024)
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