

Written Testimony of Chris M. McCully, Superintendent, EHOVE Career Center
Ohio Senate Finance & Education Committees | Regarding Am. Sub. H.B. 96
Submitted: May 27, 2025

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

Thank you for the opportunity to offer written testimony regarding the significant impact Career Awareness Funding has had on our district. I am Chris McCully, Superintendent of EHOVE Career Center, a regional career-technical school serving 16 districts across Erie, Huron, and Ottawa Counties.

The Value of Career-Technical Education in Our Region

EHOVE's mission is to prepare the future workforce for in-demand careers through skilled, hands-on education. Our more than 2,000 high school and adult students annually receive industry-aligned instruction, robust work-based learning experiences, and earn credentials that directly support Ohio's economy. EHOVE students annually earn over 1,400 industry certifications and complete more than 92,000 hours of work-based learning with nearly 200 business partners.

Building Career Awareness Across Every Age

Career Awareness Funding has not only supported career awareness efforts across our partner schools but expanded them significantly. These efforts reach students at every age and are embedded in how we collaborate with our community:

- **Partner School Kickoff Meetings** – At the start of each school year, we meet with principals and counselors from our 16 partner districts to provide a customized overview of the career exploration opportunities available for their students.
- **Preschool through 8th Grade Career Exploration Opportunities** – These structured, hands-on experiences are ongoing efforts to provide early exposure to career opportunities. During the 2024–2025 school year, EHOVE provided hands-on experiences for:
 - 19 preschoolers from the EHOVE Child Development Center
 - 72 first graders from Western Reserve Local Schools
 - 70 fourth graders from Huron City School District
 - 110 fifth graders from Edison Local Schools
 - 1,172 eighth-grade students from 15 partner districts
- **Future Makers Event** – This annual event engages ninth-grade students in career exploration through direct interaction with employers and hands-on activities. In October of 2024, 1,360 students from 13 schools participated.
- **EHOVE Community Expo** – Now in its third year, this annual event welcomes 1,300+ attendees of all ages each March to explore career-tech education through demonstrations, hands-on activities, and interactions with staff and students. It is designed to expose community members of all generations to the opportunities that career-technical education provides.
- **Saturday Youth Enrichment Exploration Classes** – Held annually in February, these youth enrichment sessions provide hands-on, career-themed learning opportunities. In February 2025, 339 students participated in 20 classes across a range of career paths.

- **Summer Camps** – A popular annual community offering, EHOVE's summer camps engaged 159 students in grades 3–9 in 2024 through 20 themed sessions designed to introduce career pathways in a fun, age-appropriate environment. These focused, hands-on learning experiences allow students to explore programs in computers, animals, welding, cooking, science, design, nature, art, languages, fitness, esports, and more.

These career awareness initiatives not only introduce students to future opportunities—they ignite purpose and possibility. Both the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce and members of the General Assembly consistently emphasize the importance of introducing students to careers at an earlier age. At EHOVE, we are doing exactly that—successfully—and our partner schools, families and community strongly support these efforts. In fact, that support was clearly demonstrated in November 2024, when our community approved a 2.2 mill bond issue to expand and modernize our campus.

Unfortunately, the House removed the \$16.3 million annual budget allocation for these vital career awareness and exploration services. We urge the Senate to restore this piece of the K-12 school funding formula in its budget package.


Facilities Expansion and Community Support

This investment will allow us to double our instructional space, modernize aging infrastructure, and support the addition of high-demand career programs including dental assisting, veterinary tech, bakery, and heavy machinery. The Facilities Planning Committee—comprised of local business, community, and education leaders—played a key role in shaping this effort, which reflects both workforce needs and strong public support for expanding career-technical education in our region.

Career Awareness Funding is critical to the continuation and expansion of the programs that are helping students find purpose and direction early in their academic journeys. If funding is reduced or eliminated, these vital, growing efforts will be disrupted. When we reach students early and often, we light the path toward skilled, fulfilling careers. Career awareness is not a luxury—it is foundational to workforce readiness and student success. Restoring the Executive Budget's proposed funding for Career Awareness, Exploration, and Development is essential to sustaining momentum and advancing Ohio's vision of a well-prepared workforce.

Thank you for your consideration and continued support of Ohio's career-technical education programs. I respectfully urge you to restore Career Awareness Funding in the Senate's version of the budget so we may continue preparing our students—and our region—for a brighter economic future.

Sincerely,



Chris M. McCully
Superintendent