



Ohio College Tech Prep

Building Quality Career Pathways

SOUTHWEST REGION

June 3, 2025

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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding the Career Technical Enhancements line item 200545, which provides funding to Ohio's Tech Prep Regional Centers. My name is Rita Graf, Chief Administrator of the Southwest Regional Service Center at Cincinnati State, representing postsecondary partners Miami University, the University of Cincinnati, and Southern State. The Southwest Tech Prep Service Center supports six Career Tech Planning Districts, and 10 Business Advisory Councils in our region.

As a proud partner of our regional Tech Prep Center, I am writing today to express strong support for restoring funding to **\$9.6 million**, as included in the Executive Budget and as passed by the House. The proposed Senate version, which reflects only a \$1.3 million increase over current funding levels, falls short of what is needed to maintain existing services while supporting the expanded scope of work outlined by the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce.

Our partnership with Tech Prep has been essential to the success of our students and programs. Tech Prep serves as the **central connector between K-12, higher education, and industry**, helping to build and sustain high-quality career pathways that align with regional workforce needs. Their support has enabled us to:

- Develop and refine aligned secondary-to-postsecondary programs
- Expand student access to career-technical education
- Strengthen dual credit and credential opportunities
- Engage local employers in meaningful partnerships
- Navigate complex state and federal initiatives with technical guidance

The Tech Prep Regional Centers have a **proven track record of high-quality service, adaptability, and leadership**, consistently responding to the ever-changing demands of both education and the economy. Their ability to convene cross-sector partners and keep us aligned toward common goals has made them indispensable to our work.

As our state seeks to further expand CTE, including the realignment to match JobsOhio's seven regions, we are excited about the future and ready to move forward. However, this expansion cannot be implemented effectively without sufficient investment. Without full funding at **\$9.6 million**, Tech Prep will not be able to meet the increased expectations **nor continue delivering the level of support we currently rely on.**

We strongly urge the committee to restore full funding so that this critical infrastructure can continue supporting Ohio's students, educators, and employers.

Thank you for your time, your service, and your continued commitment to strengthening Ohio's workforce pipeline.

Respectfully,

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