



**Ohio Senate Finance Committee  
State Operating Budget (HB 96)  
June 5, 2025**

**Testimony on Senate Substitute Budget Bill  
Scott Wludyga, Superintendent, Ashtabula County Technical and Career Center**

Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Ohio Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony today. My name is Scott Wludyga, and I am Superintendent of Ashtabula County Technical and Career Center (A-Tech). I am speaking on behalf of my school, the Ohio Association of Career-Technical Superintendents (OACTS), the Ohio Association for Career-Technical Education (Ohio ACTE), and the Ohio Association of Comprehensive and Compact Career-Technical Schools (Ohio CCS). Together, these organizations form the foundation of Ohio's career-technical education (CTE) system, advocating for our students, educators, and communities to build a skilled and competitive workforce.

The CTE Associations appreciate numerous elements of the Ohio Senate's substitute budget bill, which will help our schools offer more opportunities to students and meet the ever-evolving workforce demands of our business partners. The Senate's sub bill completes the phase-in of the current k-12 school funding formula (known as the Fair School Funding Plan) and continues investments in career-technical education initiatives intended to expand our sector and fill in-demand jobs. We recommend just a few additional improvements below that build upon this progress, ensuring we meet the unprecedented demand for both high school and adult career-technical education in State history.

**Full Restoration of Career Awareness and Exploration Funding**

We are thankful the Senate partially restored the career awareness and exploration line item in its sub bill, adding \$5M per fiscal year back as an earmark to support critical career-focused services. Although we are grateful for these funds, we would recommend full restoration of the line item as reflected in the Executive Budget proposal at \$16.3M per fiscal year. This level of funding is essential to ensure that across the state we continue to provide a comprehensive range of career exploration opportunities for young students, including career fairs, job awareness initiatives, internships, job shadowing, mentorships, and hands-on learning experiences. Investing in these programs will empower students with the knowledge and exposure necessary to make informed career decisions and successfully navigate the workforce.

As you may know, these programs reach students in urban, suburban, and rural areas, assisting them in making informed career decisions and aligning their education with Ohio's workforce needs. In my own district because of the funds, we are now able to offer career awareness activities to every student in our region. I have a 3-D name plate on my desk that was designed 3-D printed, painted and delivered by middle school students. Another middle school in our county has a small hydroponic operation thanks to these funds. Without a full restoration of

this line item, some schools may need to reduce services, potentially limiting student access to career development opportunities and impeding Ohio's workforce goals.

### **Addressing Funding Challenges for CTE Facilities**

Career-technical education (CTE) in Ohio is experiencing remarkable growth, fueled by heightened student interest, strong employer demand, and significant state investments. But a lingering impediment to this growth continues to be the inadequacy of the current funding framework for facility construction and renovation. Despite the recent \$200 million investment into our facilities, 24 career-technical schools applied and did not secure funding for their expansion goals given budget limitations. Many of those applicants still have shovel-ready construction projects that may never commence due to financial constraints.

The Ohio Facilities Construction Commission (OFCC) process, while effective for traditional K-12 schools, does not adequately address the unique demands of CTE institutions. A single CTE lab—such as an automotive repair bay or healthcare simulation suite—can cost upwards of \$2 million to build and equip with cutting-edge technology, far exceeding the scope of typical classroom construction. Yet, the OFCC process requires local districts to provide a substantial match, often through large levies that burden community resources. Over the past ten years, only three JVSDs have successfully accessed OFCC funds, highlighting the system's limitations.

To address this, we had proposed the creation of a legislative study committee to develop a tailored, sustainable funding solution for CTE facilities, potentially including a dedicated funding stream for capital projects or a grant program for smaller-scale renovations. The House had included a facilities study committee in its budget package, adopting our suggestion, but the Senate did not. We strongly support the CTE facilities study committee language adopted by the House and urge the Senate to add it to its budget package.

### **Strengthening Ohio Technical Centers**

Ohio Technical Centers (OTCs) play a crucial role in our workforce development strategy, providing short-term, high-impact training to hundreds of adult learners each year. With a 97% job placement rate, OTCs have proven their value by connecting graduates to careers in fields such as trucking, electrical work, and medical assisting. Our OTCs also provide customized training for their local employers, like a current project we are working on with Plastpro, a company Governor DeWine mentioned in his State of the State address.

Additionally, we strongly support the OTC Plus program, which allows high school students on waitlists to access CTE training through OTCs. Over the past year, we have sought clarification that OTCs could draw Higher Education Institution (HEI) funding for these students, similar to the College Credit Plus—model, we are encouraged that the House and Senate included such clarifying language in their budget packages. We appreciate such strong support for this language, which will ensure the program's sustainability and continued success.

### **Updated Formula Inputs for JVSDs**

The Governor's Executive Budget proposed a significant enhancement to the school funding formula, allocating funds to Joint Vocational School Districts (JVSDs) based on current

enrollment data. This marks a shift from the previous state operating budget, which relied on prior year enrollment figures. Given the substantial growth in JVSDs over recent years, we strongly support this change, which aligns their funding structure with that of traditional school districts. While the House had retained this update in principle, its proposed “bridge” formula diverged from the Executive Budget’s approach and altered how funds were distributed. We are pleased to see the Senate adopt the Executive approach and help ensure the final budget reflects enrollment-driven funding for JVSDs.

## **Conclusion**

Career-technical education is not merely an educational option—it is a cornerstone of Ohio’s economic future. With thoughtful amendments on facilities and OTC funding, alongside the restoration of career awareness funding, we can strengthen workforce development and empower students to lead Ohio forward. These investments will ensure our state remains competitive in meeting rising industry demands and cultivating a highly skilled talent pipeline. On behalf of A-Tech, OACTS, Ohio ACTE, and Ohio CCS, thank you for your ongoing partnership.