

OHIO SENATE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Sub. House Bill 96

MAY 15, 2025

ReUp Education

Chairwoman Roegner, Vice Chair Timken, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today in support of a proposed amendment to House Bill 96. This amendment would make a strategic investment to help Ohioans with Some College, No Credential—or SCNC—re-enroll in higher education and complete degrees or credentials aligned with workforce needs.

My name is Scott Lomas, and I represent ReUp Education, the national leader in re-engaging adult learners who have stopped out of college. Over the past decade, we've worked with public institutions and state systems in 32 states—including right here in Ohio—to help tens of thousands of students return, complete high-value credentials, and re-enter the workforce. Our model is grounded in data, informed by behavioral science, and proven at scale.

Ohio's future economic success depends not only on attracting employers but on preparing the workforce needed to fill the jobs they bring. While wins like Intel are exciting, they highlight a growing challenge: Ohio lacks the skilled talent required in key sectors like healthcare, IT, logistics, and advanced manufacturing.

The traditional pipeline of high school graduates is shrinking. Next year's senior class will be the smallest in 20 years, and only 53% of those students go on to college—ranking Ohio 35th in the nation and behind four of our five neighboring states.

That's why it's essential for Ohio to invest in adult learners who already live and work here. Nearly 1.4 million Ohioans have earned some college credit but never completed a credential. They are already in our communities and represent the fastest, most cost-effective way to close Ohio's workforce gap.

Unfortunately, Ohio ranks 44th in the nation for re-enrolling adults with some college and no credential. In the absence of a coordinated strategy, out-of-state online institutions are aggressively targeting these individuals—many with higher tuition costs and lower local relevance. Today, over 58,000 Ohio residents are enrolled in out-of-state institutions, exporting more than half a billion dollars in tuition every year. That's money that could be supporting Ohio students, colleges, and communities.

ReUp is uniquely positioned to help Ohio retain valuable tuition revenue and strengthen its higher education system. By re-enrolling stopped-out students into the state's public colleges and universities, ReUp ensures that tuition dollars remain within Ohio rather than flowing to out-of-state or for-profit institutions.

Importantly, ReUp's model is also effective in reaching justice-involved learners. For individuals who were on a degree path prior to incarceration, ReUp offers a supported and data-informed pathway to re-entry through education. This not only enhances personal outcomes but also contributes to broader social reintegration and workforce development goals.

Helping Ohio residents complete their degrees also directly strengthens the state's talent pipeline. These adult learners are already part of Ohio's communities and workforce. By supporting them to finish their education, ReUp helps meet the labor demands of key industries—benefiting employers, communities, and the state economy.

Finally, returning to complete a credential can have a transformative impact on an individual's earning potential. Students who re-enroll and graduate experience significant wage gains, advancing their economic mobility and contributing to a more prosperous Ohio.

We've already proven what works in Ohio. Through our partnership in the Ohio Comeback Compact, we collaborated with ten public institutions—including Lakeland Community College, Lorain County Community College, Cleveland State University, Shawnee State, Zane State, and others—to re-engage stopped-out students. That initiative more than doubled adult learner re-enrollments at participating campuses.

However, the grant funding that made this success possible is ending. Without sustained support, that progress—and those students—risk being lost. The proposed amendment to HB 96 offers a critical opportunity to build on what we know works and extend it statewide.

This amendment would invest \$4 million over the biennium to create a statewide Skills and Credential Marketplace—an integrated platform connecting adult learners with Ohio's public colleges, community colleges, universities, and career-tech centers. Using data analytics, targeted outreach, and one-on-one support, the Marketplace would guide adult learners from intention to enrollment to completion.

With this investment, we project:

- 4,000 additional student enrollments in workforce-aligned credentials
- Up to \$40 million in recaptured tuition revenue retained by Ohio institutions
- A measurable pipeline of Ohioans trained for in-demand jobs in healthcare, IT, logistics, and advanced manufacturing

This proposal is not just an education strategy—it's a workforce development and economic competitiveness strategy. It's about helping Ohioans complete credentials, save money, and stay connected to their communities and employers—while keeping tuition dollars in-state.

We are proud of the work we've done in partnership with Ohio's institutions. With your support, we're ready to help scale that impact across the state.

Thank you for considering this amendment to House Bill 96. I'd be happy to answer any questions or provide additional information.