



Written Testimony Submitted to the Ohio House Finance Committee
Regarding the Defense/Aerospace Workforce Development Initiative
March 30, 2017

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Cera and the members of House Finance Committee, my name is Cassie Barlow, PhD and I am the Director of the Center for Workforce Development located at Wright State Research Institute; and this Center includes the Aerospace Professional Development Center and the Regional STEM Collaborative. I wanted to share some successes of The Defense/Aerospace Workforce Development Initiative established by the Ohio Legislature in 2012. This initiative was designed to strategically strengthen workforce development linkages between Ohio's defense and aerospace/aviation industry, federal agencies and Ohio Universities.

In 2012/2013, this initiative supported the Air Force Institute of Technology and the Defense/Aerospace Graduate Studies Institute. In 2014, the Aerospace Professional Development Center (APDC) and Regional STEM Collaborative (RSC) officially opened as additional investments to work collaboratively with industry and federal organizations to fill their workforce needs and to ensure a robust Pre-K through 12 STEM workforce pipeline.

The Legislature saw the value in this initiative because Ohio ranks 14th in the US for the number of federal civilian and military positions and 15th in the nation in the number of R&D jobs, and this portion of the aerospace and defense industry is projecting unprecedented growth of 25 percent in the next decade. Yet in 2015, the APDC Industry Analysis showed Ohio lags the nation in the percent of those holding the bachelor's, graduate or professional degrees needed for these jobs. Additionally, while the number of STEM degrees completed in Ohio are growing at the same rate the completion of all other degrees are growing, the number of STEM jobs requiring degrees are growing at a much higher rate. Adding to the workforce challenges, over 60% of the Ohio aerospace workforce is over 45 and the Ohio Federal Civilian workforce is also nearing retirement age, with only 21 percent of the workforce under 35.

Since opening its doors in 2015, the APDC has successfully assisted over 1700 Ohio job-seekers find work; and shared over 900 resumes with companies and federal agencies across the State utilizing the OMJ platform. Currently, the APDC is helping over 100 different companies to find the talent they need to grow jobs in Ohio. These companies range from large government contractors, having multiple locations in Ohio to federal agencies like the Air Force Research Laboratory and NASA Glenn. The APDC/RSC teams work with industry, professional associations, educational institutions, state agencies as well as WPAFB, NASA Glenn and other federal installations to continually understand the supply and demand within the aerospace and defense industries.



Showcasing our industry sectors, educational institutions and Ohio Small Business Development ecosystem is key for attracting and retaining transitioning Veterans to Ohio. Through coordination with the federal installations as well as the Department of Veterans Services and Veterans Affairs, the APDC is a regular visitor to the 5-state-region Transition Assistance Program and has attracted Veterans from all over the world to positions in Ohio. One Vet shared, “I saw a job post from them on the APDC/OMJ web site that was exactly what I was looking for. I went from application to hired in 2 weeks (at a salary over what I told them I was looking for).”

Developing a talent pipeline is also key for future success. The RSC is comprised of committed stakeholders, all focusing teacher and student initiatives to increase student participation in STEM studies and career pathways. The RSC has been incredibly successful and one example is The STEM Fellow Program. This eight-month training program is designed for a competitively selected teacher cohort to learn STEM curriculum best practices. Currently, there are 148 STEM Fellows, with a goal to have a STEM Fellow in all 618 schools in Western Ohio. The RSC network also launched industry-focus experience days, so administrators, counselors and teachers could visit key industry sites and further their knowledge about in-demand jobs. Thus, far this highly rated program has hosted 35 educators at IT, Health Care, Aerospace and Logistics & Supply Chain Management companies – all with in-demand jobs available.

This year alone, the RSC engaged with over 30,000 students to build their knowledge about the occupational options across Ohio. At the request of companies across Ohio, who would like to engage with schools, the RSC has structured a model that will be operationalized on OMJ and make the process of internships easier for companies and schools alike, while allowing for career planning and documentation under the state’s career connections framework. One of the greatest testimonies came from a public-school student who participated in the RSC Community Connectors mentoring program. He shared that: “I was having problems with anger issues ... it changed my perspective when they came to me ... it changed my whole life ... I want to be a doctor, I want to be successful.” He was very happy to report he is going to a STEM school next year and will stay in touch with this group and his mentor.

Currently, there are over 270,000 Ohioans working in the aerospace and defense industries and as I shared this is growing significantly over the next ten years. To take advantage of this opportunity for Ohio to emerge as a global industry leader, we must continue to build our capabilities and our strategies to address critical gaps in workforce and build for the future.

Thank you for the opportunity to share the success of your initial investment in The Defense/Aerospace Workforce Development Initiative and the Aerospace Professional Development Center and the Regional STEM Collaborative. We ask that you consider a continuation of that support so the work of the Defense/Aerospace Workforce Development Initiative can continue to provide a great return for Ohio.