



Testimony on House Bill 49  
Patrick Sheren, Education Account Executive  
Microsoft  
The Ohio House Finance Committee  
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Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Ryan, Ranking Member Cera and members of the House Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 49.

My name is Patrick Sheren, I am an Education Account Executive at Microsoft. It is my job to work with Schools, School Districts and education leaders; Chiefs and Deputies, Governors and Mayors, lawmakers and policy makers to build effective programs that leverage technology and improve educational outcomes. I began my career in information technology in the late eighties, have been employed at Microsoft for the last 11 years, where my focus has been on Education.

As we all know, the landscape of employability has greatly shifted in the past few years. The type of worker required and the skills most valued by the marketplace have migrated towards careers in science, technology, math and engineering. Even outside of STEM career fields, Information Worker (IW) skills are becoming increasingly critical for employment in a variety of industries. Fifty percent of jobs today require some level of technology skills and that number is expected to increase to at least 77% in the next decade.

Currently, in Ohio alone, there are more than 12,000\* jobs available that prefer or require Microsoft skills and/or Microsoft certifications; representing positions across most all industries to be filled by Microsoft partners, customers, suppliers, vendors... These jobs require basic to advanced skills in Microsoft technology and employers are willing to compensate employees well for these skills — more than 4000 of these jobs have a salary estimate of \$40,000 annually with over 2,000 with an estimate of \$75,000.

So how do we most effectively build programs, curriculum, and training to help Ohio students and adults be better prepared for college and careers? How do we provide opportunities for students to pursue diplomas along with industry-recognized technical certifications that allow them to enter the workforce and perhaps gain college credits? How do we help bring real-world business and technical applications into classrooms while inspiring learners to gain future employability skills and certification?

To help address these trends and challenges, and to better prepare Ohio students and adults for today's workplace, we recommend the state consider leveraging the Microsoft Imagine Academy program statewide. The Microsoft Imagine Academy is a college-and career-ready education program designed to provide students with the 21st century technology skills necessary to acquire certification and be competitive in today's workplace. Imagine Academy offers over 100 certifications for students to demonstrate high-level proficiency with commonly-used Microsoft products and technologies.

The Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS), for example is Microsoft certification program for Word, Excel, Outlook, Access, PowerPoint, OneNote and SharePoint. It is the largest and most popular IT certification program in the world. When students earn this credential, it prepares them for increasingly competitive post-secondary and workforce environments across most all industries.

Not only does the Microsoft Imagine Academy provide opportunities for students, but it also extends these services to adult learners, which helps address unemployment and career changes within the larger community. Several of the states currently participating in the program have included Workforce Development Centers and even Public Libraries in their implementation to allow any citizen in the state to benefit from the resources and tools of the program. Imagine Academy provides a rigorous, flexible curriculum. Our certifications are the industry's Gold Standard and recognized and valued by colleges and employers around the world. We know from experience in several states across the US that this program brings benefits to all students regardless of circumstance or demographics as they seek a brighter future.

*As an example, in North Carolina in the year before Imagine Academy was launched (4 years ago), there were 16 high school students across the entire state who had earned a Microsoft certification. The state made a commitment that this program should reach all high school students — not just a few. And this year, we are proud to report the state has reached the milestone of over 100,000 high school students earning Microsoft certifications. Those student achievements are coming from small schools, large schools, poor schools and wealthy schools.*

Microsoft will be the first to admit that statewide implementation of its' Imagine Academy program, will not completely satisfy Ohio' needs for career-ready graduates, but it is a solution that has proven successful in other states and is a step in the right direction for Ohio. Microsoft stands ready to use any of our available resources to collaborate with you on ANY programs that seek to better prepare young adults for the modern-day workforce.

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For additional information on the Microsoft Imagine Academy program and usage case studies in North Carolina and others, please visit <http://www.microsoft.com/education/itacademy/Pages/index.aspx>  
<http://www.microsoft.com/casestudies/Case Study Detail.aspx?CaseStudyID=4000010804>

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<sup>i</sup> US Bureau of Labor  
Statistics <sup>ii</sup>  
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