

Chair Carfagna, Ranking Member Sweeney and Members of the House Finance Higher Education Subcommittee:

Good afternoon, my name is Andy Clark and I thank you for the opportunity to share my story and to discuss how the State of Ohio can help more people like me find their way and fill local jobs.

I am currently an Apprentice at Crane1 in the Dayton area. I learn, work, earn, and contribute to my employer all at once. I am currently enrolled in the Electrical Maintenance Apprenticeship program that will lead to a Maintenance Tech job. I am going to school for free and making money while I learn a job I am passionate about. While I managed to find my path, I would like you to know that a lot of people like me start off on a traditional university path and find that it isn't the right fit for them.

Most of my friends and family started off at traditional universities and I was no different. I was a good high school student and always liked to fix and build things. Because it was what was normal in my personal circle, and honestly because of the stigma around trades and around community colleges, I decided to enroll at a 4 year university as a physics major.

While this may work for some students, it was not the right path for me. I struggled at my university and my biggest takeaway from there was simply a lot of debt. I decided to take some time off and figure out what I wanted to do.

Over and over, my friends and family told me about the opportunities available in trades programs and I learned about a specific opportunity at Crane1, the company I currently work for.

I have been there for about a year now and love what I do. I learn, I work, and, when I do well, I get raises about every 6 months.

I'm glad to be here today because I would urge the State of Ohio to invest in programs like the Registered Apprenticeship program. Earlier I mentioned the stigma attached to trades and community colleges, and I can tell you that those were real factors in my decision making.

These programs are the easiest way to eliminate those stigmas, to put people like me into the jobs that companies like mine really need filled, and to provide opportunities to people that want to work hard but don't know where to start.

Providing employers like mine with financial incentives to invest in people like me will open more doors and help people get the skills they need to go to work without racking up a bunch of debt. I hope that you will consider my story and use my example as a way to help other young people chart their course towards meaningful work and good jobs. I thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today and will answer any questions you might have.