

Ohio General Assembly

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HB 577 Sponsor Testimony

Thank you Chairwoman Lanes, Vice Chair Young, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the House Higher Education committee for hearing HB 577, which would establish the Ohio STEM Gateway, the Ohio STEM Retention program, and the Ohio IT Promise.

As technology and information sectors become more established as the future of Ohio's economy, our state must take further steps to meet the needs of these employers, ensuring success for our future generations. What we see in Ohio currently is students in higher education being trained for highly skilled, in-demand jobs in STEM, but quickly leaving the state upon graduation for opportunities elsewhere. We also see a dramatic need for Ohio middle school and high school to be much more involved, trained and driven into a comprehensive education program for future careers in Ohio. The Ohio STEM Gateway has been drafted to help alleviate this issue, by offering a comprehensive, streamlined education opportunity for an information-technology and healthcare focused path.

STEM Gateway

Under the Gateway Program, each public secondary school will be required to enter in agreement with at least one public college to jointly develop 30 credit-hour pathways for studying Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, or Healthcare. This requirement falls under the existing code for the College Credit Plus program. Upon completion of the STEM Gateway Program, each college will award a one-year technical certificate in the appropriate field of study to the student.

STEM Retention

Under the STEM Retention Program, each student who completes the STEM Gateway Program, shall be eligible for a tuition credit of up to \$2,000 a year, for three academic years at any public college or related certification program, approved by the Chancellor of Higher education, in a STEM field.

IT Promise

Under the Ohio IT Promise, an individual is eligible for up to \$4,000 in student loan forgiveness if they satisfy the following:

- Participate in the STEM Retention Program
- Graduate from an approved public college or certificate program in the STEM field
- Maintain continuous residence in the state of Ohio for 5 years after graduating

The proposed legislation also makes an appropriation of \$175,000,000 to fund all three of these programs under the Department of Higher Education.

As the State continues to see increasing investment from leading technology companies, it is paramount that we prepare our state's youth for the highly skilled, in-demand jobs available to them. Thank you Chairwoman Lanese, Vice Chair Young, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the House Higher Education Committee for hearing HB 577. My joint sponsor and I will take any questions.