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Committees:

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State Representative Adam Holmes

97th House District of Ohio

House Bill 577 Sponsor Testimony

Chairwoman Lanese, Vice Chairman Young, Ranking Member Ingram and members of the House Higher Education and Career Readiness Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 577.

In my role as CEO of an industrial mechanical contracting company, I see every day the demand for workers in STEM fields. There are positions that companies like mine need to fill that offer great pay, benefits, and opportunities for professional growth. Yet not nearly enough Ohioans are applying for them. We need to grow our STEM workforce while ensuring the incentive structure encourages workers to remain in state. House Bill 577 does just that. House Bill 577 establishes the STEM Gateway Program under the College Credit Plus Program in order to recruit, train, and retain STEM students in Ohio. Under the program, secondary schools will partner with colleges to create 30-credit hour pathways for students to earn one-year technical certificates. Students that build on this certification course by enrolling in a public college afterwards will be eligible for a tuition waiver of up to \$2,000 for up to three years.

House Bill 577 also creates the Ohio IT Promise. Under this program, students who participate in the STEM Retention Program, earn a degree or certification, and reside in Ohio for at least five years after graduation will be eligible for up \$4,000 in student loan forgiveness.

By providing a more affordable pathway to STEM certifications and degrees, we will be incentivizing more students to pursue those fields and fill jobs in our state. Ohio has incredible

economic potential- our tech and aviation industries being just two examples of the massive growth we are experiencing. Yet continued growth requires a workforce that can meet the market demands. House Bill 577 will help us do just that.

I would now like to turn it over to my joint-sponsor Representative Frazier, for his testimony.