



**College of Education, Criminal Justice,
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Written Testimony on House Bill 577
House Higher Education & Career Readiness Committee
Dr. Hazem Said, University of Cincinnati
May 17, 2022

Chair Lanese, Vice Chair Young, Ranking Member Ingram and members of the House Higher Education and Career Readiness Committee, thank you for allowing me to provide written testimony today in support of House Bill 577 on behalf of the University of Cincinnati. I am Hazem Said, a professor in the School of Information Technology.

First, I would like to share some highlights about UC's School of Information Technology. The School of Information Technology offers a variety of programs: undergraduate, graduate, accelerated graduate combinations, minor, and certificates. We strive to maintain an innovative, welcoming and supportive community with many great opportunities thanks to our dedicated faculty, staff, students, alumni and industry partners. Our programs prepare students for success in key growth occupations in information technology such as Cybersecurity, software application development, IT infrastructure, and data technologies.

One of our most promising initiatives is [the Early IT Program](#), an innovative partnership that challenges the status quo for college access and affordability while significantly increasing the quantity, quality, and diversity of IT talent. This program is centered around key innovative concepts that significantly reduce the total cost of a bachelor's degree (economic efficiency) while improving the level of job readiness for the graduates (educational excellence).

The University of Cincinnati School of Information Technology partners with school districts to offer a pathway for high school students to work towards completing college and a career in Information Technology. Students complete their first year of college while still in high school. We utilize a competency-based graduate certificate to train high school teachers, enabling them to teach college courses through College Credit Plus. All students who complete their first year of classes in high school and earn a C or above average will be automatically admitted to the University of Cincinnati Information Technology or Cybersecurity programs.

The initiative launched in Fall of 2017. Since then, we partnered with more than 43 districts (46 schools) and 17 community colleges (7 of which serve on our Early IT Advisory Committee) in every region of the state. In addition, we trained and certified more than 50 high school teachers to support more than 2,000 enrolled high school students. Starting in the Fall of 2019, more than 100 students enrolled in the college program through the automatic admission and received at least one co-op placement. Furthermore, we piloted an integrated Early IT industry internship program for high school students in Summer of 2020 and more than 40 high school students benefited from it.





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House Bill 577 represents an enhancement of the model we have already build at UC. As you can see, we have already entered into these partnerships with local school districts across the state. We are actively looking to expand the number of partnerships we have and the areas that we serve. The Ohio STEM Gateway Program in the bill is an excellent opportunity for us to expand our program and serve more students interested in IT careers.

The other components in the bill, the Retention Program and the IT Promise Program, are also laudable efforts to entice more students to earn degrees in these fields, as well as keep them in Ohio to work in highly demanded jobs in our state's economy.

Finally, we want to express the strong alignment the University has with this legislation's intent to grow and retain in-demand workforce in Ohio. The University of Cincinnati is a lead partner in the Cincinnati Innovation District, which received a \$100 million investment from JobsOhio to accelerate STEM graduates by 15,000; increase total research by \$2 billion; and create 20,000 new knowledge jobs and \$3 billion of economic activity by 2030. These investments are crucial to meet the increasing demand for talent. We see House Bill 577 as complementary to this effort by enacting policies that create stronger connections for talent that is trained in Ohio to stay in Ohio.

As the institution that invented cooperative education, we are particularly proud of the experience-based learning that is a hallmark of a UC education. It is also a core component of the Early IT Program. We integrate a 20-month paid work experience with an average pay of \$61,200*, all while the student is continuing their education. This represents a double benefit, as the student gains invaluable on-the-job experience and earns money that can be used to defray the cost of education and reduce long-term student debt.

We thank you for the opportunity to provide our support for House Bill 577. We look forward to further collaborations with the bill sponsors and this committee throughout the process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Hazem Said'.

Hazem Said
Professor & Director, University of Cincinnati

* Based on the Spring 2022 average coop earnings for undergraduate students in the School of Information Technology and assuming the student will complete five semesters of coop of 18 weeks each.