

Malone University
David King, President
State Higher Education Finance Subcommittee
March 3, 2021

Chair Cross,
Ranking Member Howse,
Rep. Carfagna,
Rep. Ghanbari, and
Rep. Jarrells

thank you for your time today, and for your tireless work on behalf of our fellow citizens across the state of Ohio and particularly our students – today’s *and* tomorrow’s students – in our colleges and universities.

I count it both a great privilege and a humbling responsibility to speak on behalf of my colleagues and our students at Malone University in Canton and, by association Ohio’s independent colleges and universities.

Thank you for the opportunity to tell the story of how, at Malone University and across our independent higher education sector in Ohio we are preparing workforce and societal leaders for our complex and rapidly changing world. Indeed, we are growing human capital to fuel our state’s economy.

While the benefits of higher education to our individual citizens, to our communities, to our civic institutions and private enterprises, and to our economy are innumerable, within our limited time I would like to focus my remarks on three areas, all three of which focus on our students and their opportunity to access, persist and flourish in Ohio with a four-year college degree.

1. The Ohio College Opportunity Grant (OCOG)
2. High School graduation requirement to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA
3. Retaining our college graduates in the State of Ohio and fueling our economy of the future.

Allow me to begin by framing my remarks in this manner. At Malone University, we are educating Ohio residents, at a cost comparable to what they might pay at a state institution, yet in an uncommon, personal, wholistic, and transformational way. Evidence of the quality of the experience offered at Malone are the outcomes for our graduates who make their homes and pursue their careers in Ohio, leading in Ohio businesses, non-profits, and in their communities as innovators, employers, engaged citizens, and leaders.

We, the higher education sector, and you, the leaders of our state, must continue to make access to a college degree a priority for students at all income levels if we are to be

successful in raising degree attainment sufficient to support and drive our state's economy. We are doing our part. It has been a Malone tradition to devote substantial resources to financial aid to meet students' needs. In fact, 100% of our incoming traditional undergraduate students receive some form of aid. In the current fiscal year we have dedicated over \$17M in institutional aid in support of our students, over 30% of whom are first generation.

The State of Ohio is a partner in that effort through programs such as the Ohio College Opportunity Grant. At Malone, more than 25% of our traditional undergraduate students are recipients of the OCOG grant. For these students, a postsecondary education would not be possible without these critical resources. I respectfully encourage you to continue to support this invaluable program. Recognizing the value of a dollar invested in our students and the dividends paid in increased earnings and tax revenue over a college graduate's career, every consideration should be given to expanding this program. In addition, in many cases an OCOG recipient is also a first-generation college student. At Malone our personalized and individual mentoring uniquely supports these students.

The Ohio College Opportunity Grant truly is making a difference in the lives of many students across the state. Programs such as OCOG provide hope to families who previously thought that earning a college degree was simply beyond their reach.

The belief that college is only for the affluent is partially fueled by a lack of information. Many students and families never complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA, stopping short of acquiring the information that could lead them to making a more informed decision and making this investment in their futures. Three states, Louisiana, Texas, and Illinois have passed legislation requiring high school seniors to complete the FAFSA in an attempt to give students and families greater insight into what might be possible. This should be given every consideration as an important strategy for driving degree attainment in our state. Not everyone will want to attend college, but those who have that dream should not be deterred due to finances or artificially limited in their choices. Completing the FAFSA is an important step in opening the door of access and opportunity.

We take seriously our role as an economic driver in Northeast Ohio and, specifically, in Stark County and the City of Canton. The vast majority of our students come to us from Northeast Ohio and, due to our array of undergraduate, graduate, degree completion, and certificate programs, we are educating students of all ages, providing the workforce development needed to contribute to economic growth and community well-being in our region.

We are fiercely proud of our Stark County heritage and actively engage with the businesses and organizations in our community. Our *Stark County Futures* program is an example of our effort to develop and retain employees and servant leaders for the region. This program seeks to recruit graduates from Stark County high schools to Malone where they are provided with alumni and faculty mentors, service-learning opportunities, and a greater understanding of the opportunities in their home county starting in their senior

year in high school. It is our hope that following graduation from Malone, our graduates see opportunities for their career to flourish and invest their talent in their hometown which, as a recent study shows, is growing smaller, older and poorer. Our goal is to make a difference and contribute to changing this trend line. OCOG and FAFSA are also factors that can contribute to this goal.

A Malone education is differentiated by our commitment to welcoming, serving, and mentoring our students. We attract students and develop graduates who are interested in serving the greater good and we nurture that interest with an emphasis on service. Service to the community, to the church, and to our world. Our personalized mentoring is helping students to explore and understand the connection between their calling and their career. Our Pendle Hill Pledge program ensures that students think about and consider carefully how they can use their distinct and individual talents to shape a life and a career of their choosing and make a difference in their communities.

Our world needs more Malone University graduates. Ohio and our economy need more Malone University graduates. On behalf of our students of tomorrow and the community we serve, I encourage you to do all you can to ensure that institutions like Malone can fulfill their missions by serving students who may otherwise be unable to access the opportunities afforded them by a college degree.

Thank you again for your time, your interest, for your consideration, and your efforts on behalf of our students. Please do not hesitate to call on me if I can be of assistance in any way as you strive to navigate the issues important to our students and to the independent higher education sector.

David A. King, Ed.D.
President
Malone University