



Dayton Society  
of Natural History

Boonshoft Museum of Discovery  
SunWatch Indian Village/Archaeological Park

Chair Dolan, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Sykes, and Members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to provide testimony today. My name is Dawn Kirchner and I am the Vice President of Education at the Boonshoft Museum of Discovery in Dayton, Ohio.

We opened our doors in 1958 as the Dayton Museum of Natural History and are now known as the Boonshoft Museum of Discovery. Our museum features a natural history museum, science center, children's museum, planetarium, observatory, and zoo. Each year, our programs and exhibits give over 150,000 children hands-on experiences in archaeology, astronomy, biology, chemistry, engineering, geology, paleontology, physics, robotics, and nearly any other subject found in the world of science. Young people thrive as they interact with the permanent and traveling exhibitions that are incorporated into their activities. The resources available at the Boonshoft Museum of Discovery are unmatched.

The Museum's most important assets – outstanding educators, extensive collection of artifacts and the exhibits - present the opportunity to support Ohio students. Even pre-COVID, Ohio's education system needed more quality blended learning science education opportunities. Districts with tight budgets often are not able to provide diverse science education to students. The Boonshoft Museum of Discovery saw this need and has been providing quality online education since 2010. Existing Distance Learning programs through the Boonshoft Museum allow students and teachers to participate in a variety of STEM topics with materials sent directly to schools and supplemental curriculum provided. All programs are aligned to National and Ohio Academic Content Standards, and are taught by professional curators and museum educators for real world career connections.

After COVID hit, with many students learning virtually, there is even more of a need to fill the science gap. The Boonshoft Museum is eager to meet this need as well by expanding their programming. The Ohio Institute for Informal Science Education will be developed and curated by the Boonshoft Museum of Discovery to provide advanced high quality STEM education curriculum to schools and students throughout Ohio.

The project will begin with a Pilot Program focused on Aerospace curriculum in collaboration with The National Museum for the U.S. Air Force and Wright Patterson Air Force Base. The Boonshoft will coordinate and manage the Institute as well as conduct the Pilot Program. This includes hiring necessary staff. The curriculum will be aligned with the Ohio Education state standards and the Next Generation Science Standards.

It is the intention of the program to eventually partner with participating museums across Ohio to develop more curriculum upon successful completion of the Pilot Program. It will allow Ohio's science and natural history museums to promote and leverage fixed assets within our state to provide unique, high quality opportunities to students and educators. This will be available to all students in Ohio, regardless of where the student is educated. Eligible partners include brick and mortar museums and science centers in Ohio.

A dedicated Institute website will house enrollment of museums, database of museums whose educational programs align to state standards, registration for schools/teachers, student profiles, assessment, evaluation, and tracking tools for educators. Each entity will have a qualified teacher who grades the students.

Eventually, the Institute will provide additional pathways to STEM education via Institute resources, as well as create a mentoring system where students who already completed courses through the institute can support

other students taking STEM courses. The Institute will work with ODE to add a "STEM Passport" seal on the Ohio diploma. Teachers and schools will benefit from a fully online catalog (database) with 24/7 access to STEM curriculum, courses, professional development, and artifacts. Students will attend the museums' courses (in person or online as applicable) and take assessments after each program.

We all know it is vitally important to prepare the next generation for in-demand jobs in the STEM fields. The Boonshoft is committed to doing our part to prepare Ohio students for the future. Your colleagues in the House saw the value of this program and have included our project in their version of the budget at \$250,000 per year.

We respectfully request an increase of \$125,000 per year from the House-passed budget to allow us to hire the necessary staff to prepare, teach, and grade assignments, develop the online platform, and make connections with other museums.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am happy to answer any questions you have.