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**Ohio Workforce Association
Executive Budget Recommendations for SFY 2022-2023
Jennifer Meek Eells, President
May 17, 2021**

The Ohio Workforce Association (OWA) appreciates the opportunity to submit written testimony on the Executive Budget Bill, HB 110, for SFY 2022-2023. OWA is the primary organization focused on workforce development in the state. The Association is comprised of the twenty (20) workforce boards that serve as the strategic backbone of local workforce policy, the administrators for the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) fund, and the operators of the OhioMeansJobs Centers across the state. Each board is led by a member of the private sector, and the boards together represent over 300 businesses important to Ohio's economic success. The boards manage a workforce system that assists employers with finding and developing the talent necessary for success and assists jobseekers with identifying employment opportunities.

OWA is pleased to see the continuation of Ohio's Tech Cred program in the state budget. The OhioMeansJobs Centers and our business services teams have assisted in providing information about Tech Cred opportunities to the local businesses the centers serve. The OhioMeansJobs Centers and our local workforce boards are eager to continue to promote this innovative approach in upskilling incumbent workers.

We would like to suggest two amendments to HB 110 as presented that will increase the effectiveness of the workforce boards and the workforce system across the state if included.

Task Force on Streamlining County Level-Information Access

OWA welcomes the inclusion of the above-mentioned task force to look at how county departments of job and family services, child support enforcement agencies, public children services agencies and county OhioMeansJobs centers can streamline access to information across information technology systems. ***OWA, representing the workforce boards who manage the OhioMeansJobs centers included in the legislative language, respectfully requests two seats on the task force.*** The information systems used by the OhioMeansJobs centers are also accessed by the workforce board staff to monitor performance of the centers and to identify how employment services can be more effectively delivered to the clients of the other identified agencies in the legislation. OWA believes it would bring a unique perspective to the task force as a strategic local organization that works across agencies. In addition, we support the County Commissioners Association of Ohio (CCAO) in their quest to add three members representing a small, medium, and large county appointed by CCAO.

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Suggested Amendment to Allow Virtual Meetings by Local Workforce Development Boards

OWA respectfully requests that an amendment be added to HB110 allowing local workforce boards to implement rules allowing for video or teleconferencing during official meetings. The federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 encourages the accommodation of virtual/ teleconferencing of workforce board members due to the geographic area many boards cover and due to the required participation private sector board members. During the past eighteen (18) months, all of the local workforce boards were able to use technology to continue business, with many boards reporting that member participation, as well as public attendance, increased. This provision was formerly included in a previous budget bill, HB49, but vetoed by Governor John Kasich in 2017. This language is not in the current version of HB 110, but HB 110 does contain separate language allowing State Teachers Retirement Boards (Section 3307.091 on page 748) and Higher Education Boards of Trustees (Section 3345.82 on page 1208) to meet through the use of technology.

In conclusion, OWA is excited about many of the proposals in the current budget bill. We are invested in Ohio's economic success, as we know the Ohio General Assembly is. We offer these amendments to increase our ability to provide employers with talented and prepared employees, and we look forward to continued collaboration on policy and legislation that will further that jointly held goal. If you have any questions, please reach out to me at jmeekeellsowa@gmail.com.

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