



STEM Entrepreneurship & Innovation Program for Students to Help Develop Ohio's Future Workforce

Popularly Known as the “Believe in Ohio Student STEM Innovation & Scholarship Program”

Chairman Dolan, Ranking Member Sykes, and Members of the Committee. I am offering this written testimony in support of Amendment SC2521X1 to Substitute House Bill 110, “STEM Entrepreneurship and Innovation Program for Students to Help Develop Ohio's Future Workforce”, which continues funding of what is more popularly known as the “Believe in Ohio Student STEM Innovation and Scholarship Program”.

My name is Nancy Vondrak. I am the Business teacher at Chagrin Falls High School in Chagrin Falls, Ohio. Thank you for the opportunity to tell you about my support for the Believe in Ohio program and to share my experience of the benefits and successes I have witnessed our Ohio high school students achieve in the last eight years.

As a Business teacher I have found that it is always critical to keep current in both the curriculum offerings and instructional strategies used in the classroom. The business world is constantly changing. The advent of entrepreneurship in our country's earliest days has evolved to an ubiquitous presence that translates to “entrepreneurship is everywhere”.

With that being said, coming up with an idea, developing that idea, and taking on the risks of owning and operating a business is no longer a middle-aged male endeavor. The young people of today are the entrepreneurs of the future. How can I as an educator help students realize this and ultimately achieve their dreams?

The answer to this question came to me by implementing the “Believe in Ohio” program to teach high school students all about entrepreneurship. Since 2013, I have had the opportunity to teach entrepreneurship to literally hundreds of students at both Chagrin Falls High School and Notre Dame-Cathedral Latin School. The Believe in Ohio learning materials, curriculum and resources provided to teachers, and eventually funneled down to our students, offer a superior learning experience because they emphasize principles, critical thinking, creativity and communication. By writing a STEM business plan and then entering that plan into a local business plan competition similar to the well-known Shark Tank show, students are engaged and become problem solvers. They are creating and competing, similar to what they will experience in the “real world”.

In addition, the support provided to the teachers who use the Believe in Ohio program is something that has not been offered through other educational resources I have used. One of my favorite aspects of educational support that the Believe in Ohio program has provided is the expertise of actual entrepreneurs who serve as Executives in Residence in the classroom. These business professionals have served as mentors in advising students on their entrepreneurial ideas and how to develop those ideas.

I have had students in the past who have gained valuable experience, skills and even monetary awards as they advanced to the state level of competition for their STEM business plans in the Believe in Ohio program. I have seen the program expand its resources and support to educators throughout the last year as education was transformed during COVID times.

I strongly believe that the Believe in Ohio program is helping to shape the business leaders of the future by teaching students to be entrepreneurs and also providing the educational learning materials for teachers, all free of charge. Please continue to support the future of entrepreneurship education and ultimately the future of business and education by supporting the Believe in Ohio program.

On behalf of the students in our state, I encourage you to support Amendment SC2521X1 to Substitute House Bill 110 that continues funding of the Believe in Ohio Program.