



Chair Brenner, Vice-Chair Slaby and Ranking Member Fedor, my name is Jo Alice Blondin, and I am President of Clark State Community College. Clark State Community College strongly supports HB 154 and is pleased to see this short-term training program getting the attention it deserves.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) ranks truck drivers 9th nationally for in-demand occupations, projecting an annual job growth rate of 5% through 2024. It is BLS's only occupation in the Top Ten that does not require a minimum of a bachelor's degree. Starting salaries in Clark State's region are between \$35,000-40,000 after five weeks of training and successful attainment of the Commercial Drivers' License (CDL).

Clark State's CDL program is strategically located near I-70, I-675, I-75, and Highways 4, 40, 41, and 68, making our program central to the shipping and freight needs of many major markets. Ohio Means Jobs lists 3,658 current openings for CDL drivers in Clark State's service area.

Developing training capacity and identifying the fiscal resources to fund CDL training is a challenge. Clark State trains approximately 100 students annually, with classes for twelve students each offered approximately nine times per year. Due to capacity and funding, Clark State turns away approximately 150 potential students annually. Additionally, we lose potential students because they cannot afford the training.

The majority of community college students are working adults who may be unemployed, underemployed, or seeking to increase their skills, so paying for the certificate program is the primary barrier to pursuing their CDL, as most traditional financial aid, such as OCOG or Pell grants, do not cover CDL training. HB 154 removes this barrier to training, and for this reason, Clark State strongly supports this legislation, and would like to see more financial aid provided for students who seek short-term training and certificate programs that lead to in-demand jobs.

If passed, HB 154 will provide a major boost to training for the trucking industry.

Chair Brenner and members of the House Education and Career Readiness Committee, this concludes my remarks, and I am happy to answer any questions at this time.