**Testimony before the Ohio Senate Finance Committee
on the TechCred program**

**Dorey Diab, Ph.D.
President & CEO, North Central State College
Tuesday, October 1, 2019**

Chair Dolan, Vice Chair Burke, Ranking Member Sykes and members of the Senate Finance Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of Substitute House Bill 2 regarding the TechCred Assistance Program. My name is Dorey Diab, President and CEO of North Central State College, in Mansfield, Ohio; a proud member of the Ohio Association of Community Colleges.

We are grateful for the commitment of Governor DeWine and Lt. Governor Husted for initiating the TechCred program and supporting the completion of 10,000 certificates each year to further equip the workforce of the future and close the skills gap, especially in technology jobs. We thank the Lt. Governor - who was also joined by one of the bill sponsors, Rep. Cross - for appropriately unveiling the program at Cincinnati State Community College. In launching the program last week, Lt. Governor Husted emphasized the critical impact technology is having on business and the nature of work, and how TechCred will equip employees in alignment with the needs of employers in each region of the state, while providing those employees with pathways to advance their careers.

We are also very appreciative of the fact that the program provides more than $12 million in funding, being merit-based while enhancing availability to different size companies: small (1-50 employees), medium (51-200 employees), and large (201+ employees), with up to $2,000 for each certificate earned per employee, and up to $30,000 per employer in the first round. Enhancing educational attainment and upskilling, while meeting demographic challenges especially in rural environments, in combination with the wage increase promised to current or prospective employees upon completion of a certificate, will certainly enhance their economic mobility, improve their standard of living and quality of life in our great state.

As institutions of higher education with a history of incorporating technology into classrooms, the state's community colleges are committed partners with the state to achieve its goal of equipping 65% of adults with some level of post-secondary education or training by 2025. We believe this to be especially critical in a strong and competitive global economy. Ohio faces a severe shortage of skilled workers to meet the current and future in-demand jobs in fields like healthcare, advanced manufacturing, and technology that will drive the modern economy. Currently, Ohio ranks 33rd for overall educational attainment with a statewide postsecondary attainment rate of 44.6%, which is three percentage points below the national average of 47.6%. We thank the bill sponsors, the House, the Senate, and this committee for advancing this important initiative.

Reflecting locally on the region we serve, the NC State offers 31 credit certificates in both industry-recognized, technology-focused, and short-term credentials in business, health, manufacturing, public service and IT/STEM. Many of these certificates stack into degrees, can be completed in 12 months or less, and require completion of less than 30 credit hours. The College also serves on the statewide advisory group for the Ohio Stackable Credentials Project, at the Ohio Department of Higher Education to better support Ohio's stackable credential programs in manufacturing, health and IT.

At NC State, we have seen growth in customized training participation and requests: in 2017, 21 companies trained 87 people; in 2018, 56 companies trained 313 people; and in the first six months of the current year, 43 companies have supplied 196 participants – putting us on-track to again increase our delivery of this versatile training. On average, companies have sent five employees per company to some form of customized training.

Specific examples include:

- Plastic Technician Certificate, with industry leaders in both blown film and injection molding -- Next Generation Films and Nanogate from Richland County, who worked closely with instructors to build a customized 200 hour training that focuses on plastic and polymer science for a blown film tract used for food packaging and medical applications, or an injection molding tract used for parts in the automotive industry.
- Animal Science Certificate – Hord Livestock from Crawford County, and one of the largest hog producers in the Midwest, approached NC State requesting help developing curriculum that would prepare workers for entry into the animal husbandry and livestock farming industry. The College is collaborating with Elanco/ICEV and implementing the Animal Science Certificate program with topics that include advanced animal genetics.
- Customized training in maintenance related topics are locally in demand including hydraulics, electricity, mechanical drives and Programmable Logic Controls. These skills can be delivered in modular units as part of our Integrated Systems Technology center. In the past two months, the following companies have requested customized proposals: Fort Wayne Metals/GS Bar and wire, Pepperidge Farm, Guardian Industries, Arcelor Mittal, and Weiss Industries.

In reviewing the current TechCred list of certificates outlined in the initiative, NC State currently offers many, including:

- Certificates on a credit basis in Information Technology, like CISCO and CompTIA. We are considering compressed IT boot camps as an expedited solution for enrollment in our rural areas for hospitals, insurance companies, and many small companies.

- Certificates in Microsoft Office especially for smaller employers.

- Certificates in industrial maintenance technology are in high demand in our area and we are fulfilling our employers' needs. The Integrated System Technology lab offers hands-on, modularized training that employees can take on their own timetable and at their own pace.

- Many other certificates are also offered at the college including computer aided drafting, programmable logic controllers, computer numerical control, automation and robotics, computer networking, and cyber security.

- For a new certificate we have joined the state initiative to deliver the Amazon Web Services Certificate and look forward to partnering with other colleges and universities in serving our communities through pragmatic training in programming, networking, and cloud computing.

In May of this year, Strada Education Network issued a report based on 50,000 survey interviews of non-degreed adults, and found out that adults without a degree who hold a certificate or certification have higher full-time employment rates than their peers with no credential (85% vs. 78%). They also have a higher median annual income of $45,000 vs. $30,000 than those without a credential. Through Economic Modeling Specialists Intl. (EMSI) Job Postings Analytics, there were several hundred online postings within 45 minute drive of the College for production, maintenance and IT jobs between January and August 2019 including Wayne County (639), Medina County (617), Delaware County (462), Richland County (319), and Huron County (248). That is a total of 2,285 job openings for employees with skills that could be learned through certificated training the TechCred initiative is poised to provide. TechCred is a win-win for our workers and their families, the businesses that employ them, and the entire state of Ohio.

As a smaller college, serving more than 4,000 students annually, we are proud of serving our mostly rural communities; being designated by Achieving the Dream as one of 11 national Leaders College of Distinction for advancing student success; for having one of our largest graduating class of more than 430 students last year; for being approved and currently delivering a baccalaureate degree in Engineering Technology; and for being visited by MIT to gain insight on how we are serving the needs of the workforce.

Chair Dolan and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you once again for the opportunity to testify today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.