**Senate Finance Committee
Ohio Senate**

Senator Matt Dolan, Chairman

House Bill 2 Testimony
of
ConxusNEO

By
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Good morning. Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Burke, Ranking Member Sykes, my name is Jenny Stupica and I am the Director of Manufacturing Engagement for ConxusNEO and I am here to testify in support of House Bill 2.

ConxusNEO is a non-profit that provides leadership, expertise and facilitation to improve talent system partner performance through sector partnerships. We currently support three sectors – manufacturing, IT and healthcare. These networks are led by local businesses and designed to generate solutions to fill open positions and build a talent pipeline. We do this work by defining demand utilizing labor market information and industry insight gleaned from company partners, develop strategies to meet demand and implement these strategies. Our sector partnerships focus on generating awareness about in-demand occupations and helping individuals explore those opportunities.

Many of the companies participating in our partnerships have concerns that 20% or more of their workforce is looking to retire in the next 3-5 years. Working with other like-minded companies whether be in manufacturing, IT, or healthcare, our company leaders have put aside their individual needs and have come together to solve the workforce problem. Sector partnerships bring everyone to the table to work for the common good in our region. Without this type of comradery, our potential to fail is much higher. Our different partnerships divide and conquer the workload, focusing on industry awareness and educational partnerships. When one company cannot get to something, I know without a doubt that other companies in the sector partnerships will cover the need and vice versa. The companies have become a fantastic team, all pulling in the same direction, sharing best practices and workloads when it comes to workforce development.

While Industry awareness is good, it is not enough… individuals looking to enter manufacturing, for example, need training to not only begin a career but to grow once they start. This is why TechCred is so important. These training programs can be set up in a way that works well for individuals and for companies. By creating learning opportunities in smaller units, individuals will be able to take classes in the evening or

weekends and manufacturers will be able to produce products to meet customer demands. Individuals can earn credentials in areas of their interest, controlling the pace and direction they choose to grow.

I'd like to share two of the great programs our partnerships have championed and that are fundamental to successfully preparing individuals for development and upskilling.

We are working with Stark State College and local manufacturers to develop fast track training that is aligned with industry need. The programming will be delivered in phases of 15 weeks or less and will build upon one another both in college credits and industry recognized credentials. The training will be structured in a way that incumbent workers and individuals looking to better their job prospects can complete the training while still working. This allows companies to upskill their employees without losing production time and individuals can continue to work, maintaining an income and benefits while gaining valuable training. Each phase of programming will be offered throughout the year, allowing companies and individuals to utilize the training when they are ready.

We are also currently participating in a pilot program with the Akron Urban League and We Can Code IT, a coding bootcamp. This program, IGNITE-IT, is a 12-week program offered online and in-person by bootcamp instructors. It is designed to prepare the Urban League's clients for entry-level computer support roles by preparing them to earn A+ and Network + certifications. Successful completers of the program will be placed in paid internships or support roles with a starting wage of $30,000. We are optimistic this will also help us diversify the IT workforce and fill a gap for skilled talent that is needed for computer support roles.

Passing House Bill 2 will help ensure that the programs already being developed will become a reality and that industry will begin to develop strong candidates for the large numbers of open positions we all need to fill.

House Bill 2 is a much-needed priority focus on workforce development, that centers on micro-credentials, short term industry recognized certificates and grants for industry sector partnerships. I appreciate the opportunity to speak with the committee today. I would like to thank the sponsors for their work on this legislation, and this committee for its work on this bill. I would also like to thank the DeWine administration and especially the Lt. Governor for his work on these very important issues. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.