



Senator Sandra Williams 21st Ohio Senate District

Senate Bill 69 Sponsor Testimony Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee March 24, 2021

Chairman Johnson, Vice Chair Cirino and members of the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 69. This bill will allow college students enrolled in non-credited community college programs to qualify for the Ohio College Opportunity Grant (OCOG) and require community colleges' career certification programs to award academic credit toward an Associate's degree.

Today, there is a significant gap between the needs of employers and the skills of workers. Ohio must adapt to the changing demands of the workforce and help our citizens qualify for jobs. According to Anthony P. Carnevale, the director of the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, there are 29 million "middle jobs" in the United States that pay \$35,000 or more on average. These jobs do not require a Bachelor's degree but do require some formal advance training beyond high school. In Ohio, 30 percent of jobs are middle skilled.¹ Furthermore, according to the Ohio Department of Higher Education, there are 8,777 in-demand job openings in Ohio—with a median income of \$55,353—that only require an Associate's degree.

These in-demand jobs include skilled trade jobs, such as electricians, plumbers, power plant operators, carpenters, welders, and utility workers, just to name a few. Despite the demand for these jobs they remain unfilled due to a lack of skilled workers. The National Electric Contractors Association reported that every year 7,000 electricians join the field but 10,000 electricians retire. Electricians, with an annual median wage of \$70,480, are the highest paid jobs that only require a certificate or some college and necessary long term on-site training. Filling these job vacancies would greatly benefit our citizens, communities, and economy.

This bill provides our constituents with the resources they need to access the necessary training to obtain these jobs. According to Ohio Means Jobs, the top two job opening for individuals with a certificate or some college are nursing assistants with 2,711 annual job openings and truck drivers, heavy and tractor-trailer drivers, with 1,597 annual job openings. Closing Ohio's skill gap is imperative as the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce predicts there will be a shortfall of 200,000 nursing professionals by 2020.

By providing assistance through OCOG, Ohio would help low income individuals get the necessary training for good-paying jobs as well as help Ohio fill in workforce gaps by aligning Ohio's education and training programs with the needs of employers.

In addition, this bill would give students who have already taken classes and completed certificates, credits toward an associate's degree. Students who have already demonstrated a knowledge and mastery of a skillset should be rewarded for their effort.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee this completes my testimony for Senate Bill 69. I am happy to answer any questions.
