



**H.B. 312 – Expand Regional Education Partnerships**  
**Sponsor Testimony**  
**Representative Andrea White and Representative Tom Young**

Representative White:

Chair Edwards, Vice Chair LaRe, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the House Finance Committee, thank you for allowing us to come and testify on H.B. 312 – a piece of legislation targeted at helping Ohio reach its goal for 65% of our adult citizens to achieve a post-high school marketable credential or degree. This goal is vital to the growth and prosperity of our citizens and our communities – particularly with the rapid expansion of artificial intelligence and advanced automation.

While Ohio is making progress, we still lag the nation in intellectual capital – dropping from 33<sup>rd</sup> to 39<sup>th</sup> recently with only 51.2% of our adult population achieving a credential or a degree. Each percentage increase in attainment significantly impacts Ohio’s economy and helps our citizens maximize their ability to learn, earn and support themselves and their families.

HB 312 is all about helping Ohio keep moving toward this goal by expanding and sustaining a network of Regional Education Partnerships throughout our state. Regional Education Partnerships are pre-kindergarten to postsecondary partnerships that work together locally to identify, track, and improve key performance metrics in their communities. These collective impact partnerships combine a variety of community stakeholders such as educators, employers, nonprofits, businesses, and philanthropies. Together, they work to achieve agreed-upon initiatives in their communities to ensure students have the tools and resources they need for success from early childhood through securing a spot in the workforce. Typically, Regional Education Partnerships measure their success by tracking outcomes on a set of core metrics – such as kindergarten readiness, third grade reading proficiency, high school graduation, post high school education, workforce readiness and job attainment – all proven to yield lower poverty, crime and substance abuse levels while increasing earned income, financial security, safer communities and longer, healthier lifespans.

Prior to 2022, Ohio had four strong Regional Education Partnerships including one in the Montgomery County area – Learn to Earn Dayton. In late 2021, the General Assembly invested \$2 million in HB 169 to help expand Regional Partnerships beyond these four. In just over a year with this seed money, Ohio now currently has 10 Regional Partnerships covering 20 counties – all working collaboratively to successfully drive education and workforce success for our children and families.

The time is now to continue this momentum by establishing regional education partnerships in every part of our state. Just as the Legislature created Business Advisory Councils several years ago to

build clear roadmaps and connections between employers and students to future jobs, we also need a coordinated and sustained effort throughout our students' foundational learning years to ensure everyone is ready for the future. HB 312 calls for the Department of Education and Workforce to continue the coordinating role with regional partnerships, in conjunction with the Department of Higher Education and the new Department of Children and Youth should be involved as well.

By firmly establishing Regional Education Partnerships within the framework of the Department of Education and Workforce and within the fibers of our communities, we are making a substantial downpayment on Ohio's future. It's an investment that will yield significant outcomes and opportunities for our students and our state not only for today, but for many years to come.

HB312 went through the committee process in House Primary and Secondary Education Committee and passed with near unanimous support. Through that process, we amended the bill to make it clear that the Educational Service Centers should be included in the process, which was our intent from the beginning so it was more technical than anything.

Representative Young served on the founding community advisory committee for our local Learn to Earn Regional Partnership and I'll now turn it over to him to talk about some of the amazing accomplishments our partnerships have been able to realize in the short time they have had support from the state.

#### Representative Young:

As we've been discussing today, the education of our children and youth is fundamental to their growth and future prosperity. But education is not just an investment in our people, it's an investment in our communities and our state's future. It's been remarkable to watch the progress of our local regional education partnership, **Learn to Earn Dayton**, since its official launch in 2015. I'd like to share just a few of their amazing successes:

- West Dayton now has a U.S. Department of Education Promise Neighborhood funded by nearly \$29 million to help break the cycle of intergenerational poverty -- with a focus on improving academic attainment and family stability.
- More than 3,000 early learners each year in our region are now getting a better start through Preschool Promise.
- 80% of students in Ohio's 14 Early Colleges completed the FAFSA last school year, thanks to support from Learn to Earn.
- And our region's K-12 and higher education partners have together designed career pathways to assist students in accessing the five most in-demand industry sectors in our county – aerospace and aviation, advanced manufacturing, education, health care and IT and computer science.

Let me now share about how some of our other new and existing regional education partnerships have been able to make significant gains since meeting together and receiving grant funding in 2022:

The **Gallia-Jackson-Vinton-Meigs Regional Education Partnership** hired career coaches not only for the high school population, but also for students in grades 6-8. Those coaches have been able to implement career exploration classes, facilitate job shadowing, internships, and even job opportunities.

The **Northwest Ohio Regional Education Partnership** piloted a universal pre-k program that serves 280 children and is on track to start serving 400 students next year. Additionally, they gave access to over 900 high school students to participate in college tours which resulted in a 35% increase in college admission to partner schools (Bowling Green State University and University of Toledo) as well as a 15% increase in college enrollment in those schools. They also more than doubled the number of students who applied for scholarships and helped to secure more than \$350,000 in scholarship funds through the Greater Toledo Community Foundation.

The **Southern Ohio K6 Careers** program has helped develop and launch the second pilot program of Careers in My Community. This is a curriculum designed to increase career awareness for elementary schoolers by giving them opportunities to engage with local businesses both in the classroom and through fieldtrips. They have also enhanced partnerships that will further strengthen pathways for students going into critical healthcare and skilled trades fields.

The **West Central Ohio Regional Education Partnership** has focused on supporting student career pathways from early childhood through the time they are ready to enter workforce and increase number of local partners willing to align their plans to support the regional work being done there. This partnership reached complete agreement on their priorities across Darke, Miami, Preble, and Shelby counties.

**Stark Education Partnership** has completed a new strategic plan shifting the organization's focus to career connected work. The Partnership is on track to engage 4,000-5,000 students next school year. They also partnered with middle schools and high schools, as well as 26 local businesses, to implement YouScience (interest/aptitude inventory) with nearly 2,000 students.

In the Cincinnati region, **Cradle to Career Cincinnati** has established 10 community learning centers spread across Cincinnati Public School and formalized a partnership with Cincinnati Children's Hospital to develop an early childhood curriculum. They've engaged more than 2,000 parents through the launch of the Parent Champions Network.

You'll hear more from some of these groups today during proponent testimony, but as you can see from all these recent successes, continuing to expand and sustain Regional Education Partnerships throughout Ohio is a key strategy that works – and one we can use to continue to increase our citizens' post-high school credential and degree attainment to 65% and beyond. Please join us in taking this pivotal next step by passing HB 312 and helping to secure the educational and economic success for our students, our communities and Ohio's future.

Chair Edwards, Vice Chair LaRe, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of House Finance Committee, thank you again for allowing us to testify and we are happy to answer any questions you may have.