



**Proponent Testimony on House Bill 27**  
Higher Education Return on Investment Act  
*April 19, 2023*

Chairman Young, Ranking Member Miller, and members of the House Higher Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of House Bill 27. I am Jack Hershey, President of the Ohio Association of Community Colleges (OACC), which represents the trustees and presidents of Ohio's 23 public community colleges.

OACC applauds Representative Mathews and Thomas for advancing this bill that we believe will help students and their families better understand the true cost of college by ensuring public institutions provide standardized financial information. For most of us, the decision of where to attend college can be one of the most exciting and important decisions of our lives. And yet, we know for many individuals, understanding the actual costs and how they will pay for it can be confusing and overwhelming. HB 27 will help simplify this decision by ensuring that our public institutions of higher education are providing a clear picture of the true net costs, available financial and earning potential for our students.

A 2022 report by the Government Accountability Office, which randomly analyzed award letters from a variety of public and private colleges and universities, found that many colleges and universities are not providing students with clear and standard information in their financial aid offer letters. According to the GAO study, colleges often present cost and aid information in ways that make it difficult for students to compare and assess affordability between different institutions. In fact, the GAO found that an estimated 41% of colleges or universities do not include a net price, while 50% understated the net price by excluding key costs and other factors in loans that must be repaid. All of this, according to the report, "may leave students guessing how much they will need to pay" and makes "a college appear less expensive than it is."

The GAO recommended Congress pass legislation requiring all public and private postsecondary institutions to provide student financial aid offers that follow best practices to provide clear and standard information. However, until Congress acts on passing federal legislation, HB 27 will make Ohio a leader in cost transparency and ROI by requiring public institutions provide clear, standardized costs, financial aid information, and earning potential for graduates in declared career paths. This bill will better equip students and their families with tools when considering whether they can afford to attend one of the many world-class public colleges and universities that Ohio has to offer.

One final note: OACC has reviewed the bill with college presidents, chief student affairs officers and financial aid directors who have identified a few areas HB 27 that believe will need clarification to ensure it aligns with when and how community colleges enroll students (nearly two-thirds of our students attend part-time) and how we provide financial wellness and counseling to our students. We appreciate the sponsors' willingness to work with us on potential amendments for consideration by the committee in the near future.

Once again, Chairman Young and members of the House Higher Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 27. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.