



**Representative Sean Patrick Brennan**  
**14<sup>th</sup> House District**  
**Serving Parma, Parma Heights, and Cleveland's West Park**

SPONSOR TESTIMONY: H.B. 219

4-24-24

Chair Young, Vice-Chair Manning, Ranking Member Miller, and members of the House Committee on Higher Education. Thank you for allowing my fellow public educator Rep. Bird and I to present to you House Bill 219.

When I read Rep. Bird's co-sponsor request for this legislation, I immediately contacted him to ask if he would allow me to joint-sponsor it with him. Without hesitation, he said "let's go." I want to thank him for his willingness to work with me on this important **student-centered legislation**.

There were two main reasons I wished to join Rep. Bird on this bill. First, I was blessed to teach young learners social studies – with a focus on American Government - for nearly three decades in one of Ohio's premier districts - the Brecksville-Broadview Heights City Schools – middle school for the first half of my career, high school for the second half. In fact, I left the classroom to join the General Assembly. I wished to teach College Credit Plus courses, however, because I did not have a Master's Degree in American Government – mine was in Secondary School Administration – I was precluded from the opportunity. Over the course of my career I spent tens of thousands of dollars for my Master's Degree, as well as the six semester hours of graduate level coursework I had to complete in order to renew my teaching license each time. Going back to school to gain another Master's Degree was not fair to my family financially or timewise. Many of my veteran colleagues who also had many years of experience teaching their various subjects, including Advanced Placement or AP courses, were in a similar predicament, as are many teachers throughout the state of Ohio. The result is that many students are not given the opportunity to take CCP on their high school campuses.

There are a plethora of problems with this issue. First, students who live in rural areas of Ohio where there is not a college or university close-by, all-to-often do not have the option of taking college-level courses. Further, even students who do live closer to a college or university, like students from my House district (Parma, Parma Heights, and Cleveland) often do not have a means to get to or from the college campus or they may not wish to leave their high school campus for many reasons, including wishing to be with their friends and trusted adults, socio-emotional issues, conflicts with sports or clubs schedules, access to meals and/or social services, among many other issues.

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The other reason I wished to work on this bill are the costly CCP textbooks, which are dictated by the college or university. As a teacher, I eliminated expensive textbooks in my high school courses years ago, instead using primary sources readily available on the internet. This not only saved the taxpayers thousands of dollars, but I like to think I prevented many cases of scoliosis in my students over the years, not to mention learning like a historian and political scientist, by reading, analyzing, and discussing a letter by George Washington is much more exciting compared to open your textbook to page 191 – read to page 195 and answer the questions about George Washington at the end of the section. The cost of CCP textbooks is an unfunded mandate on our public schools. In fact, school treasurers have shared that the way CCP is structured, makes for quite a challenge when it comes to setting budgets due to the constantly moving target.

House Bill 219 addresses the two issues students, parents, guardians, teachers, and school administrators have with the current CCP program in Ohio. It will require that the Chancellor of Education create alternative pathways for veteran teachers to become eligible for teaching CCP courses. This would be in accordance with the Higher Learning Commission's (HLC) recently adopted faculty qualifications policy. The HLC is the accreditation authority for colleges and universities. Their new policy change specifies that an institution of higher learning can deem instructors qualified on the basis of a variety of factors, including academic credentials, progress towards academic credentials, equivalent experience, or some combination thereof, as opposed to exclusively academic credentials – interpreted currently as a Master's Degree in the specific subject area to teach CCP in Ohio. In short, H.B. 219 is in total compliance with the HLC and will not cause credentialing hick-ups for the college or university working with a school district that wishes to host CCP courses.

Further, it requires that those teaching CCP courses seek open source materials, as opposed to expensive traditional (hard-bound or online) purchased textbooks. In doing so, they will save the school district - the taxpayers – a small fortune and lead to a more authentic and exciting learning environment for students.

Thank you for the honor of allowing us to provide this testimony on HB 219. I would truly appreciate your consideration.