



Ohio Senate Finance Committee HB33 – Biennial Budget May 31, 2023

Chair Dolan, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Ohio Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding HB 33 and tell you more about Ohio's high quality career-technical education pathways. As many of you already know, my name is Dee Smith and I am the Executive Director of the Ohio Association for Career and Technical Education, affectionately known as Ohio ACTE. Ohio ACTE has been the leading voice for career-technical education in Ohio since being founded in 1955 as the Ohio Vocational Association, and is the only statewide, professional organization for all things career-technical education. Our 6,000 members include both k-12 and adult educators in all parts of the state and are teachers, instructors, administrators, directors, and superintendents. Together, association members work to provide exceptional career-technical education for students, no matter their age or the setting in which they attend.

As you may have noticed from social media, since taking my position on May 1, I've been on a bit of a statewide tour of Ohio's Career Technical Planning Districts. As part of this tour, I recently visited Greene County Career Center, a joint vocational school district, to participate in their signing day. A signing day is when students are signing their letters of intent for their "E" – Enrollment (post-secondary), Enlistment (military), Employment (direct to workforce) or Enrollment and Employment (apprenticeship). To say I was blown away is an understatement. I watched and listened as seniors were called forward: 5 students enlisted into 4 branches of the US Armed Forces, 1 student was receiving \$153,000 in scholarships to North Park University in Chicago, and another was receiving \$144,000 in scholarships to the University of Dayton. Direct to industry, there were students going into auto tech starting at \$66,000 per year, cosmetology starting at \$40,000 per year, and then there were the apprenticeships – the young man going into the Ironworkers apprenticeship was starting out at \$89,000. It's clear, the focus has shifted from work-ready or college-ready to career-ready, meaning every student is prepared to start the path to their future career whether that means direct to workforce, additional training for certification, associates, bachelors, enlistment, or some combination those options.

I know your days are long and your time is short during budget season, so I will highlight a few facts you may not know, and then touch on a few of our budget priorities.

- 77,602 students earned an industry recognized credential in the 2021-2022 school year. Those 77,000 students are prepared to go directly into the workforce to fill our industries most critical needs.

- \$2M earned by students participating in apprenticeships at just one school in one-year.
- 135,243 Ohio Students participated in a CTE pathway last year—an increase of 10,000 students in just one year. This is not an anomaly; our schools will tell you they have watched the steady increase in enrollment year after year.

Career-Technical Education is being embraced by Ohio families. A great example is Kettering-Fairmont High School, a member of the Kettering-Centerville-Oakwood Compact, where 50% of their juniors and seniors are currently participating in CTE. (That number could have been even higher, but their pathways are full). With 70% of their sophomores applying for programs next year, they will turn a significant number of students away simply because they are out of space.

Kettering-Fairmont is not unique, CTE programs across the state are busting at the seams. This is evidenced by the 59 proposals submitted to the selection committee working with the DeWine-Husted Administration to recommend shovel-ready projects for the proposed \$200M CTE Expansion Program in HB33. **Combined these 59 proposals total over \$469M.** The need is clear, and the need is now.

For context, note that at the direction of the DeWine-Husted Administration and in order to ensure the \$200M is utilized as efficiently and effectively as possible, the CTE Associations recommended a diverse group of career-tech leaders from across the state to form a recommendation committee; these leaders are from every region, delivery model and size of career technical planning district. Together they have met to develop an application process, template, and scoring rubric to inform their funding recommendations to the Ohio Facilities Construction Commission. Their goal is to align the conclusion of their work with completion of the budget process, and their hope is this will allow OFCC to jumpstart their validation process, commence groundbreaking events as soon as possible and most importantly – *provide more students CTE opportunities as quickly as possible.*

I'm sure you are left wondering what else can we do to create additional access to students, *right now*; the answer is to think outside the box and utilize investments the state has already prioritized for workforce development. HB33 contains language providing high school students the ability to take coursework and otherwise earn credentials and certificates at Ohio Technical Centers (OTCs). We are referring to this program as OTC Plus; this concept is meant to provide immediate relief for capacity issues at the state's secondary career-technical schools. I urge you to support this provision as well as an amendment we are advocating that is intended to increase program efficiencies and create a more effective and predictable funding framework (the amendment modifies language in the Executive version to ensure the program will deliver a meaningful impact that increases capacity and addresses wait lists in short order). Many believe the proposed program would also spur the growth of adult workforce development statewide. I have been told on many occasions, when parents see what their child has achieved, they want to know how they can do it too.

I would be remiss if I did not take this opportunity to also mention what has been described to me by policymakers as an unintended consequence of the Fair School Funding Formula—the decrease to over 100 districts in CTE Supplemental Funding. Because of the low state share index of these school districts, their career-technical programs only receive a small chunk of CTE supplemental funding to pay for equipment and supplies. I can provide you several examples, but the one that sticks with me the most is a district in northeast Ohio that will go from receiving over \$300,000 to right around \$30,000 at full phase-in; and this district runs 13 CTE programs. We are talking about funds used to buy welders, metal, and gas for welding programs; construction materials, tools, and safety equipment for construction programs; and hard-drives, software, and networking materials for IT/Cyber programs. Building additional capacity is necessary, but legislators should also consider the ability for districts to run these programs with long-term success. Thus, I urge you to support amendments being offered to set a floor for the state share percentage that applies to CTE Supplemental funding, which will offer some relief to these districts, as well as consistency across the state and its CTE delivery models. Precedent exists for this concept in the state’s transportation supplement, which incorporates a floor that gradually increases to approximately 42% in FY 24.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my passion for CTE. I would be happy to answer any questions.