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Senate Workforce & Higher Education Committee

Testimony on House Bill 27

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Ohio Excels

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Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Rulli, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Workforce & Higher Education Committee, my name is Kevin Duff, and I am the Vice President of Policy and Research at Ohio Excels. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 27 (HB 27) today.

Ohio Excels is a non-partisan, non-profit organization created by leaders of Ohio's business community to engage employers more consistently and deeply in efforts to help improve educational outcomes for all Ohio students. Our focus areas include early childhood, K-12, and postsecondary education. Ultimately, our goal is to make sure more students graduate ready for success and employers have the talent they need to keep Ohio growing.

Ohio has been fortunate to secure an increasing number of economic wins throughout the state. However, these new developments will exacerbate a workforce shortage that has persisted for many years. There are plenty of Ohioans looking for work, but many simply do not have the training required for the current economy. Currently, [just 51.2%](#) of Ohioans have completed any type of postsecondary education, well below the 65% that economists say is critical to keeping us competitive in the future. The bottom line is that Ohio's colleges and universities need to produce more skilled graduates so the state can deliver on these economic wins, secure new wins in the future, and allow more Ohio families to share in the state's success.

This starts with making higher education – which includes technical training, community colleges, and four-year universities – more affordable. Cost is the number one barrier people face when considering higher education. A [recent national study](#) found that 38% of potential students did not enroll because of fears about the cost of college and amassing debt. A recent Ohio Excels poll found that number one reason Ohioans stop attending higher education is because of the cost of tuition and other living expenses.

Ohio Excels believes that HB 27 is a great step toward making the cost of higher education more transparent and accessible. The bill requires colleges and universities to give applicants Financial Cost and Aid Disclosure Forms with the student's initial financial aid packet. These forms capture the full cost of attending the institution in one place that will be consistent across institutions so students can compare their options. We especially like the inclusion of outcome information like potential student loan payments and income ranges of actual graduates. The bill could be strengthened even further by including the institution's graduation rate as well.

The bill incorporates information about work study opportunities, but we would also recommend information related to paid work-based learning opportunities as well. Through work-based learning, students can earn income, get real-world experiences, make connections to employers and the community, and get a head start on finding a job after graduation.

Combined with the state budget's significant increases in need-based aid, we think that HB 27 will help make higher education more accessible, affordable, and allow potential students make informed choices – ultimately helping to close the workforce gap and set up more Ohioans for success. Ohio Excels encourages the committee to pass HB 27.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak to the committee today, and I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.