



Ohio House Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education

Testimony of Lauren Massie, Adult Education Director Career and Technology Centers of Licking County, OTC Division HB 110, State Operating Budget

2-24-21

Chair Cross, Ranking Member Howse, and Members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education, thank you for inviting me to testify today. I am speaking on behalf of my school, the C-TEC Ohio Technical Center, as well as the Ohio Association for Career Technical Education (Ohio ACTE) and the Ohio Association of Career Technical Superintendents (OACTS). These Associations not only represent the state's 91 Public Career-Technical Schools (including its 49 Career Centers), but also its 52 Ohio Technical Centers (OTCs)—which focus on providing short-term adult technical training to meet Ohio's diverse, regional workforce needs.

My name is Lauren Massie, and I am the OTC Director for C-TEC. I have over 17 years of experience in career-technical education, including at the Ohio Departments of Education and Higher Education. I have been at the local level for 4 ½ years as the adult education director at C-TEC; leading one of the most high-performing OTCs in the state. C-TEC trains over 3,000 adult students and incumbent workers each year – more than 550 students in 17 full-time programs, 300 students in ASPIRE/GED programming, and approximately 2,300 employees in business and industry training programs. In FY19, C-TEC had a 90% graduation rate, 97% job placement or continuing education rate, and an 88% industry credential attainment rate (based on FY19 ODHE HEI data). We also partnered with more than 40 employers on 77 incumbent worker training projects in Central Ohio in FY20. Most recently, and throughout the Pandemic, these training partnerships helped companies prevent lay-offs, and re-open and re-tool their employees, while also helping dislocated Ohio workers re-skill and up-skill to get back into the workforce. Along with the other 51 OTCs located across the state, we play an integral role in the Ohio's higher education framework.

Background on OTCs: OTCs are funded through and regulated by the Ohio Department of Higher Education, and provide a host of educational services for adult students and businesses. Adults can earn certificates, licenses and other credentials in typically a year or less. Although normally housed and governed by either the Career Center (Joint Vocational School District), or the comprehensive school district of which they are part, each OTC has a separate funding mechanism than their secondary counterpart. At almost every OTC, general funds from local levies or other local funds are not used for OTC expenses. Each OTC therefore stands alone except for the use of facilities and utilities. (Although there is a trend that more OTCs are paying for these expenses also).

OTC Funding Levels: Like our college and university counterparts, OTCs have struggled in the wake of the Pandemic. But we recognize the state’s challenging fiscal outlook and the difficult funding decisions each agency and the legislature faces. Although in the last budget (HB 166, 2019-2020), ODHE proposed to fund OTCs at over \$23M in FY 2021, overarching Pandemic-related budget cuts resulted in this number being reduced to appx. \$20.2M. That said, we are pleased to see ODHE propose a 3% increase in our funding to \$20.8M in each fiscal year over the next biennium. We appreciate the Department’s support and partnership during this challenging time and seek to maintain this level of funding as the budget moves through both chambers of the legislature.

OTC Funding Distribution Mechanism: OTC directors and CTE Superintendents are satisfied with the Performance Based Funding Model for OTCs, which allocates dollars to each school based on several benchmarks—including student retention, program completion, earned credentials, and placement into employment. We are also pleased to see that in each fiscal year, no OTC will receive less than 50% funding based on the average allocation of the previous three years. The current budget also allows the OTC allocation to include \$3M to provide business contract and customized training with matching dollars from OTCs.

Conclusion: In sum, we all know we have a workforce shortage in Ohio. There are several pathways that adults can take in post-secondary education in order to meet the demands and “fill the skills gap.” There are needs for those with Masters, Bachelor’s and Associate degrees. But the majority of employment opportunities are in skilled trades. OTCs are the resource for the majority of adults to learn skills in short-term training programs that lead to high-paying, high-demand jobs. By working directly to develop training specific to their needs, we are also vital to helping Ohio employers build a stronger, more skilled workforce.

Ohio’s 52 OTCs thank you for your support and allowing us to testify. I would also encourage committee members to visit their local OTC and see first-hand the incredible work they are doing to strengthen the state’s workforce. Thanks again and I would be happy to answer any questions regarding my adult education programs at CTEC or any others across the state.