

Karen M. Phee

Chairman Pavlov and members of the committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to share our thoughts on the concurrent enrollment legislation.

Being born and raised in Michigan, I watched with some intrigue and trepidation the 2008 government bailout of GM and Chrysler. Of particular interest to me, however, was the announcement that a mass shutdown of dealerships nationwide was part of the negotiations. All I could think about was all those auto mechanics who had been narrowly trained for a specific job at tech centers nationwide were going to be out of work. Not only were they facing unemployment, but it's likely they lacked both the confidence and skills to retool for their next career.

Fortunately, the philosophy on how we prepare students for technical careers has changed at our tech centers here in Michigan and we now expose students to wider pathways of allied careers so that they are both aware of and have initial skill development in a variety of jobs within an occupational framework.

But, in Ottawa, we weren't satisfied with that. What the bailout and the Great Recession that framed it taught us is that life can change on a dime and it's not *if* you will need to change careers, but *when* and what is your confidence in your ability to retool. We knew that the confidence that comes from successfully completing even a single college course was an important part of that equation. We also knew that our tech center students, for the most part, were getting short changed on that experience. And while we acknowledge that not all jobs require a college education, in Ottawa, we believe every student has the right to be college capable so that they are able to navigate life's surprises down the road.

That's why, six years ago, our Tech Center launched its first concurrent enrollment program with Lake Michigan College. Since then we have added Ferris and Kendall to our direct college credit mix. College coursework, taught by our Tech Center faculty to the specifications of those institutions

is now available to students in 20 of our 28 programs. They are earning their tech center credit and college credit at the same time. In just the last two years of the program, almost 400 students have earned over 1,400 credits at a cost of between \$49 and \$100 per credit hour, saving them over \$125 thousand.

And while those are certainly wonderful intended consequences of our initiative, we think the following two things are equally important:

First, that our Tech Center students are building their confidence in their ability to manage college-level rigor, and are able to do so with the guidance and support of our tech center faculty. Many students in high school possess the academic knowledge and ability to master first year college content, but might not have that college-going savvy or social skill to be off campus yet. A concurrent enrollment program keeps the rigor high, but the risk low.

Second, by completing college level work now, even if they choose not to or don't need to pursue additional college work after high school, these students know that when, not if, life changes on a dime and they need to return to a community college or technical school in the future to retool their skills, they will be successful in doing so. We're giving them that "been there, done that" sense of confidence.

We are thrilled that you are considering this legislation and we are pleased that we have been able to conduct a fairly long pilot study for you. We can say without hesitation and without reservation that this is one of those things that does make a difference for students now and will make a difference for Michigan's economic resiliency in the future. Thank you for considering the bills.