



HOUSE BILL 33 – (FY 2024-2025) STATE OPERATING BUDGET

WRITTEN TESTIMONY- OHIO HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE

MARCH 29, 2023

Chairman Edwards, Vice-Chairman LaRe, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the Ohio House Finance Committee, I am writing on behalf of the nearly 21,000 members of the National Federation of Independent Business in Ohio (NFIB) to lend our support to several workforce and education provisions contained in House Bill 33.

For reference, NFIB is a small business trade association founded 80 years ago that is dedicated to representing the interests of small and independent businesses across our state and nation. NFIB's mission is to promote the right of our members to own, operate and grow their businesses. NFIB members come from all industry sectors and each of the 88 counties across Ohio. Our average member has 20 or fewer employees and has less than \$2 million in annual gross receipts.

HB 33 contains several proposals that would provide significant investment in Ohio's workforce development and education sectors to better prepare students for the workforce needs of today, while also ensuring businesses are equipped with the knowledge and expertise to be competitive in the global economy. According to NFIB's most recent national monthly jobs survey, 47% of our members are currently experiencing a shortage of workers. This number far exceeds the survey's 49-year average of 23%.¹ It is vital for Ohio to invest in programs and initiatives that will give students, employees, and employers across the state the necessary tools to grow, attract and keep jobs and industry here.

First, we continue to strongly support the TechCred Program. HB 33 would allocate more than \$50 million over the biennium to the program to help employers upskill their current workforce and/or train prospective employees. This program has already proven to be a win for employers, employees, and Ohio. Employers get a skilled workforce, employees become more marketable, and the state moves closer to its goal of a 65% credentialed/degreed workforce. Since TechCred's inception in 2019, over 57,000 awards,

worth more than \$64 million, have been made to over 2,000 employers. Of those awarded employers, 30% are small businesses.

Furthermore, this budget provides a necessary one-time infusion of \$100 million over the biennium for career and trade schools to invest in much needed equipment upgrades and \$200 million in construction grants to enhance career tech education and training programs so that students are being trained and educated with the most modern and advanced tools utilized in today's economy. Another recent survey found 42% of our members indicated a need for employees with training and expertise in the skilled trades and these investments will help supplement that need.³

As of February, 60% percent of NFIB members reported hiring or trying to hire. Of those, 90% of business owners reported few or no qualified applicants for the positions they were trying to fill!⁴ Another positive item in this budget, one that will help to aid the workforce shortage, is the \$52 million over the biennium dedicated to enhancing high school industry-recognized credentials to better prepare individuals to fill workforce needs and begin their careers sooner.

NFIB supports these important education and workforce development priorities in HB 33 as we believe they will go a long way in addressing the challenges facing Ohio's employers today and in the future. Easing the burden for individuals to earn a degree, develop their skills, or learn a trade is a paramount goal of our member business owners. We look forward to the General Assembly adopting these and other related measures to achieve our shared goal of growing Ohio's economy.

Sincerely,



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^{1,2} <https://www.nfib.com/foundations/research-center/monthly-reports/jobs-report/>

³ <https://www.nfib.com/content/news/ohio/survey-ohio-small-businesses-say-inflation-staffing-will-remain-challenges-in-new-year/>

⁴ <https://www.nfib.com/surveys/small-business-economic-trends/>