



April 5, 2022

## **Testimony before the Ohio House Higher Education and Career Readiness Committee**

Chair Lanese, Vice-Chair Young, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the House Higher Education and Career Readiness Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on House Bill 514, the Graduating and Retaining Ohio's Workforce (GROW) Ohio Act. My name is Eddie Pauline, and I serve as president and CEO of BioOhio, the state's largest and longest-standing advocacy nonprofit for biotech and life sciences industries here in Ohio. BioOhio represents nearly 300 members that employ more than 100,000 Ohioans – from our state's largest employers to emerging start-ups, universities to research institutions, and students to inventors. The bio- and life sciences industries are key economic drivers for Ohio: they have grown from their agricultural and manufacturing roots to encompass some of the world's most groundbreaking discoveries in biomedical research. We have seen billions of dollars of funding and investment in our bioscience companies, equating to excellent jobs for Ohioans: The average salary for an Ohio bioscience employee is \$84,600 a year. The industry supports \$7.1 billion in payroll annually. It continues to grow. But our industry needs help to support that growth.

I recently completed a listening tour with our bioscience industry leaders, traveling around our state to hear about their work, their successes and their needs. Among their most pressing concerns was workforce development – recruiting and retaining the best and brightest bioscience talent.

BioOhio is building a workforce development strategy and implementation plan that builds on our members' desires to strengthen relationships and partnerships with colleges and universities. Our plan creates needed early-career opportunities, such as co-op and internship programs. Many of the member companies BioOhio represents offer such programs; all who do would tell you that while these programs are "extremely beneficial" to their companies, they are also a heavy lift. BioOhio is pleased to see that the GROW Ohio Act invests in student talent by offering employers a refundable credit of 30 percent of paid wages. We believe that will alleviate some of the pressure on this growing industry.

Our member companies also told me that they have difficulty recruiting quality candidates to come to – and to stay – in Ohio. I spoke with one bioscience industry leader not long ago who told me his company had set its sights on several promising young scientists, only to lose those talents to Boston or Chicago. We are happy that the GROW Ohio Act invests in recruiting and retaining talent, both through scholarships and through a 100 percent refundable state income tax payment for up to three years of employment following graduation.

BioOhio member companies currently have a range of open positions, spanning from manufacturing to artificial intelligence specialists, from biochemists to clinical trial members. Our member companies offer high-quality career pathways with boundless opportunities for growth. But they need

talented graduates to fill those roles. The GROW Ohio Act will allow students who graduate with an associate's degree to use OCOG to obtain a bachelor's, further enhancing their ability to pursue meaningful careers in the health and life sciences, and creating a talent pipeline for our member companies.

We are asking the Ohio House Higher Education and Career Readiness Committee to approve the GROW Ohio Act to allow Ohio's bio- and life sciences industry to continue to grow by investing in our most important resource: people. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Edward J. Pauline". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "E".

Edward Pauline  
President & CEO  
BioOhio