

Crystal Jordan  
Metro Early College High School  
Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee (HELP)  
Early College Testimony

Good afternoon Senator Brown and members of the committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to be here and share my thoughts with you today.

My name is Crystal Jordan, I am a senior high school student here at Metro Early College High School.

As a Metro Early College student, I am a graduating Senior at my home high school, Walnut Ridge while concurrently participating in the program here at Metro. Metro Early College High School is an educational option for our partner districts and is one of only two options for early college or STEM in Franklin County.

For those of you who may not be aware, briefly, Metro is a small, public high school option for students from across Franklin County. We're not a charter school. As an Early College High School, students are expected to complete all of their high school requirements and up to 60 hours of college credit in four years. Our early college studies are being implemented through a STEM curriculum — science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

First, I'd like to thank you for the support of early college high schools through innovative programming. Your support of schools that are creative and innovative is spurring high school education reform in Ohio and creating global citizens like me.

Attending Metro Early College High School has prepared me well and has been one of the wisest choices I have ever made. I have had the opportunity to do things that I never thought I could do in an environment that challenged me to maximize my potential. For example, I have participated in an advisory each year at Metro. During advisory, my classmates and I would plan and carry out various service learning projects and explore fields of interest through career shadowing days and college visits. Most schools don't think that the development of me as a citizen who is active and responsible for making things better in the community is an important part of the responsibility of the school. That is not the case for Metro. Metro is all about helping me see my future in a way that causes me to notice what needs to change and what my role might be.

Metro takes seriously the opportunity and exposure necessary for students to explore career fields in STEM. I learned a lot about myself and what I might like to do through my internship. While attending Metro, I have completed two internships, one of which was required and the other I chose as an elective. The first internship at a local glass art studio called Glass Axis, and the other was at the Franklin Park Conservatory's Chihuly Resource Center. During these internships, I discovered that I have a love for visual, hands-on art and that STEM thinking is an important part of the work that they do to create the wonderful exhibitions that I love. I learned skills that included providing services and goods to clients, helping art organizations to balance their finances and upholding functional business. I have shadowed the director of visual productions at Bath and Body Works and a public relations specialist at a major local advertising design company. These experiences have taught me more about the diverse fields of business and art and have contributed to my fascination with the field.

At Metro, once students have completed the credits of a full high school curriculum, they have the opportunity to Gateway, which is what we call the presentation of our capacity to do college level work. During my Gateway, I

presented the habits and skills that I practiced throughout my Metro classes. These tools prepared me to succeed in college level classes. I had to provide examples of high school coursework and my grades to a panel of OSU, Battelle, and Metro professionals, my parents, and a student advocate. It was a lot of pressure, but it prepared me to do things like speak to you today.

Metro has carefully exposed me to college courses. The first college course that I completed was a four-day Entomology course taught at Ohio State's Stone Lab on Lake Erie. Every student in this class was from Metro, and although the course was short, it provided enough challenge to motivate me to step up my performance. Because Metro is an Early College High School and a public school option, Metro students do not need to be concerned about financial issues when taking courses at Ohio State. The tuition, books and fees are included in the operating budget for our school and are not a burden on me as a student. It is really a scholarship opportunity for students. This allows students and their families to focus on their coursework, rather than worry about having funding for their classes. When I attend college next year, I will have a significant amount of coursework completed with success. I think that these opportunities are beneficial to all students because it enables us to achieve.

Attending Metro Early College High School shown me that it is my responsibility to become a peer model to underclassmen who are looking forward to succeeding in the same way that I am. Because I am a member of Metro's first graduating class, I've gotten the chance to experience so much, and often, Metro gives me the opportunity to share my experiences with other students and with you.

Participating in an early college programs is especially beneficial for me, because I am given the chance to explore different fields of interest before I even start college as a freshman. Last quarter, I took an economics course for my intended

major of Marketing. From taking this course, I found that I have a great interest in the analysis of statistical data.

I have always struggled with organization, study habits, and time management, and as an early college high school, Metro did its job to prepare me by providing me with skills, and effective habits to overcome my learning weaknesses in a supportive environment. Adults call this 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills, I think they are survival skills for my future. Classes are about 20 - 1 at Metro, and it is easy to talk to your instructor about any questions that you may have. Also, Metro provides support through advisories, counselors, and tutors to help students gain confidence and a positive outlook on college.

Attending Metro has been a very beneficial, challenging, and fun experience for my classmates and me. Next year I plan to attend The Ohio State University as a full time student and am a Morrill Scholarship recipient, and I look forward to the possibility of seeing more students like me who have had the opportunities and instruction that Metro has provided.

I encourage the committee to consider continuing its investment in early college high schools as you review and make decisions on the reauthorization of legislation. There are more students like me who need this kind of environment, training and encouragement.

Thank you for your time.