



Office of the President

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U. S. House of Representatives
Committee on Agriculture
Room 1300-Longworth House Office Building

Members of the Committee on Agriculture and other Congressional Members, thank you for giving me, the president of Central State University an audience in order to provide testimony in support of HR Bill 6020. I wish to especially thank the members of the Ohio Congressional leadership for their support of our efforts and their willingness to support this very important legislation. Thank you, Congressman Gibbs for your introduction of me to this committee. Thank you, Representative Fudge and Representative Beatty for your direct engagement with Central State University in encouraging and providing innovation and unending support to the countless students from Ohio and all students who need "champions" for their success!

The history of Central State University, an 1890 Land-Grant Institution begins with our parent institution, Wilberforce University (WU), named in honor of the great abolitionist William Wilberforce. Established in 1856 at Tawawa Springs, Ohio, WU is affiliated with the African Methodist Episcopal Church and is one of the oldest Black-administered institutions of higher education in the nation.

In 1887, the Ohio General Assembly enacted legislation that created a Combined Normal and Industrial Department at Wilberforce University. The objectives of this new state-sponsored department were to provide teacher training and vocational education, and to stabilize these programs by assuring a financial base similar to that of other state-supported institutions.

The statute establishing the Combined Normal and Industrial Department declared that the institution was "open to all applicants of good and moral character" thereby indicating no limitations as to race, color, sex, or creed. It was clear, however, that the Department and its successors were designed to serve the educational needs of African-American students.

Although this Department operated as part of Wilberforce University in most respects, a separate board of trustees was appointed to govern the state-financed operations. In 1941, the department expanded from a two- to a four-year program, and in 1947, it legally split from Wilberforce, becoming the College of Education and Industrial Arts at Wilberforce. The name was changed in 1951 to Central State College, and in 1965, the institution achieved university status. The University has grown steadily since its' founding. In recent years, it has added new academic programs, established a new College of Science

and Engineering and constructed the accompanying Joshua I. Smith Center of Education and Natural Sciences, four new residence halls, and completed construction of a new University Student Center in Fall 2015.

In February 2014, the 113th Congress of the United States designated Central State University an 1890 Land-Grant Institution. This designation is a distinct recognition for an Ohio institution of higher education, and Central State is one of two institutions to hold this distinction. The major impetus of the designation is to provide access to education and to promote opportunities for students with interest in Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Agriculture (STEM-Ag) integrated through all academic disciplines.

In tandem with progressive academic achievement, the University has embodied tenets of *Service...Protocol...Civility*[®]. Its faculty, staff, and students will provide *service* to the institution, and various communities for the greater good; be guided by *protocol* and adherence to best practices in order to gain desired results; and actively demonstrate *civility* with the understanding that respect for each voice is essential to a learned society.

Much more has changed at Central State University throughout its history. However, one constant is the commitment to providing an excellent, affordable education to the residents of Ohio and beyond.

Embedded in the University's Strategic Plan is Six Compelling Priorities that will be the focus of Central State University's initiatives. Those Compelling Priorities are:

1. Provide quality collegiate and academic experiences
2. Focus on targeted student enrollment
3. Reduce time to degree
4. Promote higher retention rate
5. Development of graduates with the knowledge, skills and dispositions for professional careers and/or advanced studies
6. Implement efficient and effective institutional operations

Each of these Priorities is correlated to Ohio's performance model that allocates 50% of the University's state funding based on course completion and graduation. Central State University is the only 1890 public university in Ohio and it is has the highest percentage of students (83%) who are Pell Grant eligible. As of 2016, 87% of the student body applied for loans to subsidize attendance.

In order to receive Grants, Loans or Institutional Aid, students must meet the Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) threshold. Every year, Central State University's attrition rate is on average 40% across the University with the highest attrition occurring between the first and second year. Approximately, 73% of the students who do not return are students who have met the SAP eligibility but, are unable to maintain their monthly debt loan payment.

Although the University attempts to ameliorate this serious attrition issue by providing institutional funding and by teaching financial literacy modules, we are unable to provide substantial support that will stop the erosion of students who must “stop out” or completely withdraw from the University.

The H.R. Bill 6020 presented by Representative David Scott of Georgia and co-presented by Mr. Cramer, Ms. Fudge, Mr. Ashford, Mr. Love, Ms. Graham and Ms. Adams supports the hundreds of students who have the academic propensity and acumen to not only change their future but the future of their families and communities. Beyond the financial stability that H.R.6020 would provide, there are other benefits that can be derived: complete their college degree uninterrupted; graduate with little or no debt to the federal government or to the institution; better focus on college completion and securing employment or an advance degree; less concern and stress on working families who support the college experience; opportunities to pursue meaningful academic disciplines in STEM-Ag and opportunities to pursue internships in fields that lead to careers with the US Departments and or other state and federal agencies.

Central State University with a 129-year history of academic excellence has produced outstanding graduates who have made significant contributions in medicine, arts, politics, business, law, education and certainly in service sectors. Representative Joyce Beatty is an alum and she joins such notables of history as Leontyne Price, Arsenio Hall, Michael Ajisefe (President of ABUAD University, Nigeria), Hugh Douglas, Joshua I. Smith, Michael D. Brown, Hastings Bandu and Nancy Wilson. All of these notables of history were first-generation college students. The students we educate today are so very much like the mentioned alums. The difference is that today’s students are more at risk because of the lack of family financial support and knowledge of sound financial decision making.

H.R. 6020 will set a standard of support that breaks the cycle of “unfulfilled” promise to many generations of students who can either positively make their mark as productive citizens or become a part of the American dream that’s often relegated to the shadows and fringes. Central State University has the ability, dedication and determination to produce the best graduate possible. As president of this iconic and historical institution, I seek your support for H.R. 6020.