

Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee, thank you for this opportunity to tell you the story of The University of Akron and to discuss our request for capital funds. My name is Gary L. Miller, and I have the honor of serving as president of The University of Akron.

I want to begin by thanking each member of the Committee for taking the time to meet with me several weeks ago. I very much appreciate the opportunity to get to know you better and to get your perspective on our great Ohio public universities and how we might continue to build our relationship with you. Thank you.

City of Akron, and the Northeast Ohio region. We are also a global university, ranking number one in North America in polymer science and plastics engineering, and rapidly emerging as a world center for the study of the sustainability of polymers. In fact, The University of Akron and our industry partners submitted a proposal in February to receive \$70 million in funding from the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) Regional Tech Hubs Program for a Sustainable Polymers Tech Hub. We have already received a designation and a development grant in our Phase I application. Out of nearly 400 total applicants nationwide for the Phase I Award, 31 received a Tech Hub designation, and 29 received a strategy development grant. Our application was one of only 11 to receive both, and the only successful application from Ohio. We are also excited to be a strong contender for a State Innovation Hub Program grant. Our proposal is focused on polymers, and I wish to express my thanks to the Ohio General Assembly, the Department of Development and the Governor for creating and funding this program in the most recent operating budget.

In addition to conducting world class research, teaching with cutting edge technology and collaborating with leading industry partners, we are a university of opportunity. We work with great intentionality to create pathways for all learners ²from high school students to first-time full-time freshmen to adults ² to find ways to get them the kind of post-secondary education that will give them the best chance to succeed in their lives and in their careers. We serve rural students at our regional campuses and urban students at our main campus. Our goal as an opportunity university is to provide economic mobility to all students and help them obtain successful careers here in Ohio.

Our commitment to opportunity, to partnership and to making and doing things derives from our deep roots in Akron.

The University was founded as Buchtel College in 1870 by the Ohio Universalist Convention and in 1907 transitioned to a

developing significant programs in partnership with these hospitals to address healthcare workforce needs in Northeast Ohio.

We believe it is essential that our University education includes opportunities for students to explore all aspects of the human condition. This has great educational value, and such broad education is required by most engineering and technology degree programs. But this broad education also has essential economic and workforce value.

There is a large and convincing literature for example showing that the strategic deployment of the arts in efforts to revitalize legacy cities and their distressed neighborhoods has significant and positive effects on economic development, attracting new residents and strengthening neighborhood communities.

The City of Akron, its region and the University have fully embraced this strategic opportunity. The University owns two of the largest buildings in downtown Akron, the former Polsky Department Store and Quaker Square, the original Quaker Oats facility. The University is putting these assets into play in a way that will strengthen downtown Akron. We received a \$20 million gift from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, one of the largest gifts ever awarded to a single project by the Knight Foundation—to transform the Polsky building into Knight Creative, a vibrant community and educational space in the center of downtown Akron. We are asking for \$6 million from the state capital budget for this project because it is part of our space reduction and consolidation initiative. The renovations will allow us to relocate the Myers School of Art to the Knight Creative, which will allow us to vacate Folk Hall. Folk Hall carries an annual operation and maintenance cost of over \$200,000 and needs a new air handler at a cost of \$2 million. Creating renovated spaces in the updated Knight Creative building will lead to cost savings for us as we are able to consolidate and reduce space, reduce operation and maintenance costs and lessen our deferred maintenance costs. Our goals guide our capital planning vision.

In terms of Quaker Square, we are working with great energy in collaboration with the State Controlling Board to sell

MBA program is ranked as a Tier One MBA program and as a top 50 program nationally. Our undergraduate business program is ranked among the top 100 in the country and Northeast Ohio. The University of Akron School of Law's Trial Advocacy program is ranked No. 24 in the country which is the highest ranked program in the state and the second highest in a six-state region. In addition, the Intellectual Property program is ranked No. 51 in the country and the parttime program is ranked No. 49 in the country and second in the state.

As you can tell, I am incredibly proud of our accomplishments and I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to share them with you, but we are here today to testify

Credit for Prior Learning– This is a program designed for people in the workforce who started work on a college degree or certificate but never finished. Our faculty and staff will evaluate their work, military and life experiences and assign academic credit where possible leaving these people with many fewer academic credits needed to graduate. We have saved up to two years on work toward a college degree in some cases.

Coursera- We are a partner with Coursera the nation's largest and most respected provider of online education.

I have three major items for which we need your help:

1. A central goal of The University of Akron is to get students jobs. Within six months of graduation, 95% of students who earned undergraduate degrees responded to a Handshake survey are employed full or parttime, participating in a voluntary program,