



**Testimony of BOCES of New York State
Hearing of the Assembly Committees on
Education and Higher Education
On Early College High School
Submitted by Dan White, District Superintendent
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on behalf of the BOCES Educational Consortium
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Good morning, Chairpersons Benedetto and Fahy, and Members of the Senate. I am here on behalf of BOCES of New York State, the entity representing the 37 Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) of New York State. Thank you for allowing us to provide some important information about the college courses for New York State students, the options for providing such courses, and the role of BOCES in doing so.

Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) were created by the Legislature in 1948 “for the purpose of carrying out a program of shared educational services in the schools for the supervisory district and for providing instruction in such special subjects as the commissioner may approve.”

For the past 75 years, local school districts have been able to use BOCES to provide a wide range of programs and services through an organizational structure that is a model of inter-district cooperation. In addition, BOCES can leverage the strength of multiple school districts and provide a wide variety of services that individual school districts,

especially small, high-need districts, cannot efficiently provide. These include but are not limited to:

- Enrichment programs;
- Special education programs;
- Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs;
- Behavioral health services;
- Technology services (through the Regional Information Centers (RICs));
- Professional Development; and
- Central business offices (CBOs).

College in high school programs are some of many enrichment and career and technical education (CTE) programs that BOCES provides in partnership with their component districts. In the 2021-22 school year, 2,881 students across the state participated in Smart Scholars and P-TECH program run by BOCES around the state in partnership with institutes of higher education, school districts, and industry partners.

However, as grateful as we are for the structure and financial support that allows us to run these grant-funded programs, they only represent a portion of our college in high school offerings. BOCES takes advantage of other opportunities to provide access to college-level, advanced coursework in other forms as well. In the 2021-22 school year, at least 17,275 college credits were awarded to high school students through BOCES dual and concurrent enrollment programs. At last count, more than 2,100 colleges and universities around the state have entered into articulation agreements with BOCES, ensuring that the credits attained in high school will be accepted by those institutions. All BOCES dual enrollment programs have articulation agreement of some kind.

The delivery mechanism of these college-credit-bearing courses is as varied as the regions of the state. In addition to the fully structured programs provided by P-TECH and Smart Scholars, there are additional formal and informal arrangements that have been developed to meet the needs of students and communities. Colleges and universities around the state have worked with BOCES to allow students to attend

courses on campus, to have credit-bearing courses delivered in person in BOCES and district classrooms, and through online coursework (just as they make online courses available to their own college-age students). Oftentimes, BOCES has been able to negotiate arrangements on behalf of their students and component districts that allow students to access this coursework at little or no cost to students and their families. The SUNY system and the SUNY Community Colleges have been especially strong partners in this work to provide access and minimize or eliminate cost to families.

To ensure that these programs, in all forms, not only continue, but grow, we offer the following thoughts and recommendations:

- **A clear mechanism for tuition and support for students would be helpful.** As noted, BOCES around the state are finding ways to make coursework available but the patchwork of agreements and systems, despite best efforts by regional leaders, still results in inequitable access. Establishing a fair and equitable system throughout the public university system with a state mechanism to support BOCES and their districts who make these opportunities available to students would equalize access. This system of support should exist outside the competitive grant system, which can sometimes disadvantage smaller communities without a grant writer or internal capacity. Moreover, private colleges and universities who participate in generous state programs, such as TAP, EOP, HEOP, and Enhanced Tuition, could be incentivized to participate in such a uniform system as well.
- **More state guidance and regulation over articulation agreements for public and private institutes of higher education would increase the value proposition of these programs.** By creating assurances that course credits will not only be accepted but will be accepted as the same course and will fill the same requirement that a course taken at the college or university would fill, the state and school districts could more confidently invest in these credits.
- While some structure and guidance would be helpful, **we would caution against an over reliance on uniformity or devotion to a singular model**

of providing access to college in high school courses. No one model or program is perfect, and not every model or program will be achievable and scalable in every part of the state. Geography and population density should not determine if students have access to college-level coursework. While state support and structure would be appreciated, regional leaders need the flexibility to meet the needs of their students and communities.

We appreciate the opportunity to share our thoughts and recommendations today. At a time when so much state and national dialogue around the burden of student-loan debt is dominating the conversation about higher education, we would be remiss not to note that access to early college opportunities has the potential to decrease student and family reliance on student loans and aid packages, thereby increasing degree access and completion by allowing students to complete a Bachelor's degree in fewer than four years – or, for those students entering a field which may require an Associate's degree, bypass student debt entirely.

Thank you again for allowing us to participate in this conversation today. We are happy to take any questions at this time.