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Testimony
Presented to Senate Education Committee
Grow Your Own Teachers and Lehigh Carbon Community College Dual Enrollment

By

Dr. Ann D. Bieber
President, Lehigh Carbon Community College

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony to the Senate Education Committee regarding the efforts that Lehigh Carbon Community College is making to impact the statewide teacher shortage and our highly successful Dual Enrollment program for high school students in our service region. We appreciate the support of the chair and members of the Senate Education Committee and your interest in the vital role of community colleges in the Commonwealth's education and workforce development.

LCCC is a comprehensive, public, two-year college with a mission to build a stronger community by providing an accessible, equitable, inclusive, and affordable education to empower students to achieve academic and career goals. Founded in 1966, the college has served the community for the past 57 years and adapted quickly over the decades to ensure we continue to meet the needs of the community to create an educated workforce and prepare students to transfer to earn bachelor's degrees and beyond.

Approved as an institution of higher education by the Pennsylvania Department of Education and accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, LCCC serves Lehigh, Carbon, and Schuylkill counties in eastern Pennsylvania. LCCC is recognized by the US Department of Education as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). In the fall 2022, 28% of LCCC's students identified as Latinx. The college has also earned the title of Military Friendly Institution and recognized for its work to assist veterans and active military and their families.

The college serves students at the main campus in Schnecksville, sites in downtown Allentown at the Donley Center, and in Tamaqua at the Morgan Center, as well as online. In addition, flight training courses are offered at our site at the Lehigh Valley International Airport. Additional institutional data is available on the LCCC [website](#).

The college is owned by 13 sponsoring school districts, in Lehigh and Carbon Counties. The college has strong and mutually beneficial connections with districts and schools throughout our service region including three career and technical institutes. LCCC partners with schools on such activities as Early College, dual enrollment, afterschool programs, and professional development. LCCC is the lead organization in the Carbon/Schuylkill/Luzerne/Wayne/Pike STEM Ecosystem that includes approximately 80 school districts, intermediate units, employers, and community-based organizations. Senator Argall has been a strong advocate of this initiative which serves over 310 students daily.

The college is committed to creating a seamless pathway for members of the community to achieve their educational goals. One of the most successful programs is our Dual Enrollment program which increased students by 17% in 2021-22 from 2020-21. Dual enrollment allows current high school students to take college courses while earning high school and transferable credits toward a future degree. In addition to being a cost-effective way to get ahead on college coursework, it prepares students for what to expect at the next level and sets them up for success in their future academic endeavors. Students from our sponsoring school districts in Dual Enrollment classes pay \$70 per credit with no fees. And for classes taught by an approved high school teacher, that cost decreases to \$30 per credit. Although this is a reasonable price for some students, the cost is prohibitive for many students. The college works with donors and grants to provide funding when possible. The offering of this low rate in the absence of a state program to provide a reimbursement means LCCC offers this coursework at an operating loss, but we do so as part of our commitment to expanding access.

Dual enrollment courses are offered in 21 different high schools in 16 school districts, charter schools, private schools and career and technical institutes across Lehigh, Carbon, and

Schuylkill counties. Currently, in the 2022-23 academic year, more than 200 Dual Enrollment classes are offered, with enrollment of almost 2400 students. LCCC has the capacity to enroll more and believes more students would do so if costs were not a barrier.

Many of these students are prepared to continue their education, either at LCCC or another higher education institution. In the graduating class of 2022, for example, of the nearly 1,300 students who had completed Dual Enrollment classes with LCCC, 15% (192 students) continued at LCCC to earn their college degree. Of these high school graduates, a full 81 percent (1,047 students) continued their education at a college or university, either in Pennsylvania or nationally, at more than 200 different institutions.

We understand there is concern nationwide and specifically within the Commonwealth about the ongoing shortage of teachers. Our 13 sponsoring school districts, representing both urban and rural communities, are also feeling the impact of this shortage.

LCCC is committed to working with our partners to help address this educator shortage crisis. As a Hispanic Serving Institution and an institution with a diverse student body, LCCC is uniquely positioned to help the Commonwealth recruit and train students to diversify the Commonwealth's educator workforce. In the fall semesters since 2018, enrollment in the top three education programs has totaled more than 1,200 students. And, since 2018, the college has graduated 300 students in all its education programs.

An associate of applied science degree is offered in Early Childhood Education, allowing students to complete the program and enter the workforce quickly. For professionals already working in early childhood education, the Early Childhood Director certificate allows them to earn training that will advance their career, all at no cost, thanks to the PA Professional Development Organization grant. A general associate degree in Education can be transferred to many state and private colleges and universities where students can earn their bachelor's degree. The associate degree in Special Education can also transfer seamlessly through one of the more than 600 transfer agreements with 63 colleges and universities in the Commonwealth and across the country in a range of degree programs with both public and private agreements.

Dual Enrollment students from any school in our service area are welcome to register for standard LCCC classes that are part of the education major. In the spring 2022 and fall 2022 semesters, 20 high school students completed one or more education classes through Dual Enrollment.

Beginning its fifth year in the fall 2023, Early College is a program for 11th and 12th grade students who enroll full time at LCCC for two years, earning an associate degree while simultaneously earning their high school diploma. Over 200 students have graduated high school with their associate degree and successfully transferred to 36 different colleges and universities. An additional 200 students are currently in the program.

You may have heard about the Allentown School District Pathways to Aspiring Careers in Teaching, a new program that encourages high school students to pursue teaching degrees and return to the district as education professionals. To support this initiative, Early College students enrolled at LCCC will have the option to pursue an associate degree in education. With a combination of Education courses and electives, LCCC's Education degree is a foundation for transfer to a bachelor's degree in education and teacher certification for middle or secondary schools, grades 4 through 12. Cedar Crest College has agreed to provide scholarships and a seamless pathway for the graduates of the program to continue for their bachelor's degree in education.

Working with career and technical institutes and school districts to attract students into the teaching profession while still in high school is a focus at Lehigh Carbon Community College. Currently we are working with the Lehigh Career and Technical Institute (LCTI), specifically, to develop an education pathway beginning in the 9th grade. A pathway is anticipated to be in place by the fall 2023 semester in which students will have an opportunity to move seamlessly from LCTI to LCCC on a pathway to prepare them for careers in education.

To ensure that future teachers and educators are ready for this challenging and rewarding career, the college works closely with community partners to provide field experience, including our sponsoring school districts, childcare facilities, career and technical institutes, and more.

As challenges in the classroom change, the programs at LCCC are changing to address them. A comprehensive approach to educating students means that they are prepared for the unique challenges of any classroom. Regardless of the program they are in, imparting hands-on, real-life learning is integral. Our new Makerspace labs, located at our site in Tamaqua and on the main campus in Schnecksville, are designed to promote collaboration and provide a space for hands-on, experiential learning that highlights the real-world application of academic lessons.

Students in all the program tracks receive well-rounded exposure with robust field experience. Students are active learners and strong problem solvers – qualities that will serve them well in the challenging and rewarding field of teaching.

Lehigh Carbon Community College is proud to play an integral role in the education of the citizens of the Commonwealth and looks forward to continuing to forge new partnerships and create pathways to meet the economic needs of our community and the educational needs of our citizens. However, we need everyone's assistance to showcase the teaching profession and the rewards and benefits for students to consider entering this profession. In addition, we also need assistance removing financial barriers for students who want to both participate in dual enrollment and enroll in education programs, including scholarship assistance.

We look forward to working with the chair and membership of the Senate Education Committee to continue this great work.

Thank you.