November 9, 2017

The Honorable Warren Davidson
1004 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Davidson,

Through the Inter-University Council of Ohio, on behalf of Ohio’s fourteen public university presidents, we write to express our deep concern with and current opposition to the recently introduced Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, H.R. 1, sponsored by Representative Kevin Brady (R-TX). While we appreciate the work that has gone into the legislation and support reform of the nation’s tax code, we believe that, as currently written, this legislation will negatively affect our students, their families, and the country’s economic competitiveness.

As we look to educate the next generation of highly skilled workers, we must insist upon the highest possible standards and opportunities for our students, and defend them. We must continually seek to improve college access and affordability and protect the advancements already achieved in both areas. To compromise any of those principles in the pursuit of tax reform is unacceptable. Yet that is just what this bill will do, despite the suggestion that these reforms purportedly will simplify the benefits available to students seeking a higher education. The result will be an overall reduction in those benefits for students.

Specifically, the Inter-University Council opposes the proposed elimination of:

- The Lifetime Learning Credit;
- Tuition remission;
- Employer-provided tuition assistance;
- The Student Loan Interest Deduction;
- The charitable deduction for certain contributions; and
- Coverdell education savings accounts.

The legislation’s significant expansion of the standard deduction will have implications for charitable giving as it reduces the number of itemizers and thus the number of individuals benefitting from the charitable deduction. In addition, charitable donations are the primary source of endowment funds. Universities use their endowment resources to support libraries, laboratories, student services, other critical education-related activities, and for student financial aid. These resources increase access for students and improve affordability. Any proposed tax reform that imposes a “one size fits all” approach
The Honorable Warren Davidson  
November 9, 2017  
Page Two

to the structure to excise taxes or payout requirements will do more harm than good and make it more difficult for institutions to meet their legal and fiduciary obligations relative to endowments and foundations.

Increasing the tax burden on students and their families will discourage many potential students from pursuing a higher education. Without those highly educated workers to fill jobs, the country’s economic growth will be severely constrained. If adopted as written, this bill will have the counterproductive consequence of generating some revenue for the country today, in the short-term, at the expense of the lifetime earning potential of many individuals. This, in turn, will actually weaken the long-term tax base of the nation’s economy.

If the intent behind the proposed changes is to make the United States a competitive international destination for business, then that also requires the country to develop and maintain a highly skilled workforce. Unfortunately, this reform works against that goal because the proposed changes are neither aligned with nor conducive to the development of such a workforce. Therefore, we strongly encourage the United States House of Representatives not to eliminate the above provisions.

Thank you for considering our concerns. Ohio’s public universities look forward to working with you to support this great country’s economic competitiveness by keeping essential benefits that promote a highly skilled workforce, ensure continued access for all, and maintain affordability.

Sincerely,

Signature Page Attached
November 9, 2017

President Matthew J. Wilson
University of Akron

President Mary Ellen Mazey
Bowling Green State University

President Cynthia Jackson-Hammond
Central State University

President Neville G. Pinto
University of Cincinnati

President Ronald M. Berkman
Cleveland State University

President Beverly J. Warren
Kent State University

President Greg P. Crawford
Miami University

President Jay A. Gershen
Northeast Ohio Medical University

President Michael V. Drake
The Ohio State University

President M. Duane Nellis
Ohio University

President Rick S. Kurtz
Shawnee State University

President Sharon L. Gaber
University of Toledo

President Cheryl B. Schrader
Wright State University

President James P. Tressel
Youngstown State University

President Bruce Johnson
Inter-University Council of Ohio

The Public Universities of Ohio
The University of Akron
University of Cincinnati
Miami University
Ohio University
Wright State University
Bowling Green State University
Cleveland State University
Northeast Ohio Medical University
Shawnee State University
Youngstown State University
Central State University
Kent State University
The Ohio State University
The University of Toledo