

# **Congressional Testimony**

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House Subcommittee on Early Childhood,  
Elementary and Secondary Education**

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Good afternoon. My name is Thomas Svitkovich, and I am the Superintendent of Genesee Intermediate School District (GISD), which is Genesee County's regional educational service agency.

Our organization is pleased to be the operating agent for the Genesee Early College, a high school on the campus of the University of Michigan-Flint. We were the successful recipient of a state grant which enabled us to build this program from the ground up. Our first steps included developing a partnership with the University of Michigan-Flint, our region's three hospitals (Hurley Medical Center, Genesys Regional Medical Center, and McLaren Regional Medical Center), the Greater Flint Health Coalition, and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. This concept of an early college is also supported by the 21 constituent K-12 school districts in Genesee County, along with districts bordering the county, who send us their students.

The program is focused on students with a strong interest in pursuing a career in the health employment sector. The student body includes future doctors, nurses, physician assistants, and medical technologists, as well as students pursuing just about every other health related career you could think of. It is an extremely rigorous program, including a full high school curriculum and two years of college work. Each student that graduates from our program will earn a high school diploma and 60 transferrable college credits.

Many of our students will complete their bachelor's degree at University of Michigan-Flint, some will transfer to schools in the area, and some will leave the state to pursue their baccalaureate coursework in the nation's colleges and universities. Middle College and early college research has proven that five year

programs for high school students located on a college campus which includes significant college work all but eliminates the dropout possibilities faced by today's first and second year college students. The power of our program is that it quickens the pace and allows students to enter their medical profession of choice a year earlier. It also guarantees a higher rate of success for our students after graduation as they pursue their degree.

Our first steps after the collaboration was formed included working with our partners, hiring a talented staff, and solving the ever present financial challenges to ensure that we could operate the program. These financial issues will continue to plague us since we are one of a handful of the nation's early colleges located on the campus of a four-year institution of higher education. We are pioneers in the development of these types of programs that are highly effective and have a positive impact on our economy. In the future, the equation for this program can be transferred to engineers and other high demand professions, quickening the pace for getting the right people into new programs to move our economy forward.

This program, because of our very effective partnerships with the health community, includes first hand experience with physicians and other medical specialists. The power of the place, the power of the university, the power of the hospital setting is extremely important. We cannot build this kind of learning laboratory in a traditional high school. The program is totally different, innovative and extremely effective. It cannot be delivered without leveraging resources from a variety of sources. Even with the initial infusion of capital from both public and private partners, the long-term success of this intensive, on-site learning environment requires additional resources.

However, we are no stranger to the challenge of operating middle colleges and early colleges. We are celebrating the 19<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Mott Middle College on the campus of Mott Community College. We were the first middle college in Michigan, and one of a few in the nation to open its doors nearly 20 years ago. We have been extremely pleased with the growth and evolution of this program, especially the success of our graduates. Today, nearly 400 students attend Mott Middle College. These students have all dropped out or experienced limited success in a traditional high school setting. These students enter our program with an average GPA of 1.6. A few years later, they graduate with an average GPA of 3.1 and all have completed a minimum of a handful of college courses. Some leave with an Associates Degree.

We patterned Genesee Early College after our successful Mott Middle College. These two schools are prime examples of why the Fast Track to College Act is essential; especially with regard to the high rigor required for success in the health employment sector. Without the help of the federal government, we will not be able to deliver our promise to the brightest and the best, nor to those with amazing potential that will go unrealized without these types of programs. These students have made sacrifices and choices for opportunities which surpass those available through a traditional high school experience. They are capable of succeeding in a very competitive environment with our help, and we are doing our best to ensure their success

Our support for the Fast Track to College Act is based on several factors. First, we believe this legislation reflects the research that supports the development of early colleges and middle colleges. Research shows that students, who complete a minimum of 26 hours of post-secondary credit, while still in high school, have an 85% chance of finishing their bachelors' degree (Adelman, 1999). Second, we see an important economic need to fill vacant medical positions. This is true at the national level, but especially on the local level. There is a demand to prepare more medical professionals to fill positions and maintain service capacity as our baby boomer population transitions into retirement. We also see the need because of the rapidly growing need for technical knowledge within the field, like the new micro surgeries and the pervasive use of technologies. New doctors will have this knowledge. Finally, we believe the Fast Track to College Act reflects upon the many years of experience and success we've had at our Mott Middle College.

A federal investment in fast-track programs can provide schools serving low-income students with resources and incentives to establish and support dual enrollment programs and early college high schools. Such an investment will help more students obtain a postsecondary credential by exposing them to the rigors of college-level work, motivating them to continue their postsecondary education, and saving them money in the process. With this support, we can begin to break down the walls created by poverty. Aside from the economic, health, and poverty factors, however, the bottom line is students. This is an opportunity for students they otherwise will not have without your support. It's all about giving our young people the opportunity to compete and win in a world economy.

I want to again thank Congressman Kildee and members of the Committee for this opportunity. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.