

**Testimony before the Senate Committee on Education and Career Development
Supporting HB 1248 – State Financial Aid**

Given by Andrew Bradley, Senior Policy Analyst, Indiana Institute for Working Families
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Thank you Chairman Kruse for the opportunity to speak today, to Representative Truitt for authoring this bill, to Sen. Pete Miller and Sen. Charbonneau for sponsoring it, and to Rep. Dermody, Rep. Clere, Rep. Moed, Rep. Smith for their leadership on this issue.

My name is Andrew Bradley, and I am representing the Indiana Institute for Working Families, which also staffs the Indiana Skills2Compete Coalition which is made up of policymakers, employers, and workforce stakeholders all come together to advocate for middle-skill jobs. We appreciate the work reflected in HB 1248 of the Commission continuing to fine-tune the state's financial aid award to better serve both the needs of Indiana's students, including those pursuing technical certificates and credentials.

I want to be sure to point out one aspect of the bill for praise. It's effectively only nine words long, but it will go a long way toward opening up EARN Indiana's work-based learning opportunities currently available to full-time students to adults, the great majority of whom attend part-time for work or family reasons. In 2013, Indiana ranked 41st in the nation, with 30.1% of prime working-age Hoosiers 773,335 ages 25 to 54 with only a high school diploma or equivalent (that's 773,335). Meanwhile 22.9 percent of prime working age Hoosiers have some post-secondary but no degree; these two groups combined add up to over 1.3 million Hoosiers that likely need to increase their skills to be competitive in today's economy.¹

The plain reality is that most working adults trying to increase their skills and educational attainment will need to keep working while taking classes. By opening EARN Indiana to part-time students eligible for the Adult Students Grant, HB 1248 will expand their opportunities to find jobs in the field they are studying. At the same time, this bill will provide employers with a wider field of employees with previous work and life experience who are interested in gaining skills in their field, and who may become candidates for long-term full-time positions.

Thank you for your consideration.

¹ Working Poor Families Project data generated by Population Reference Bureau, analysis of 2013 American Community Survey