

- Mr. Chair, Members of the Committee, Good morning, and thank you so much for allowing me the opportunity to offer testimony today.
- My name is Brandy Johnson, I am the brand new President of the Michigan Community College Association taking over from Mike Hansen since his retirement at the end of last year. Michigan's 28 community colleges respectfully oppose House Bills 5361 and 5362.
- Nationally, it's been more than 32 years since the first baccalaureate degree was conferred by a community college, and this authority has been statutorily granted to Michigan's community college for the last 10 years. As of November, 24 states in the country, including Michigan as well as our regional competitors in Ohio and Indiana, authorize community colleges to confer baccalaureate degrees. This trend has only accelerated over the last five years.
- None of these states have contemplated removing local taxing authorities— not have community colleges morphed into new universities. Their legislators, accreditors, students, and communities know that these institutions are still at their core, community colleges.
- Community colleges overwhelmingly offer two-year associate degrees and certificates, and this will always be the case. However, sometimes a bachelor's degree is necessary to meet the qualifications for a position in an in-demand field.
- The community college baccalaureate programs are not offered in the liberal arts – for example, you will not see a community college asking the legislature for permission to grant degrees in history or anthropology. The programs that community colleges seek to offer are all applied degrees and really offered in fields or communities where a university is not best suited to offer a program that meets a specific workforce need.
- In Michigan, during the 2019-2020 school year, only 5 community colleges (out of 28) conferred any type of Bachelor's Degree, and all were in applied or technical fields.
 - Alpena granted 1 Bachelor's Degree in Cement Technology
 - Lake Michigan College and Jackson College granted a total of 5 degrees in Energy Production
 - Schoolcraft College granted 2 Bachelor's degree in Culinary
- Our largest producer of Bachelor's Degrees is Northwestern Michigan College in Traverse City where the closest University is about 100 miles away.
 - NMC is home to the [Great Lakes Maritime Academy](#) and the [Great Lakes Water Studies Institute](#), and as such is uniquely positioned for teaching, research and public service in marine and maritime studies that lead to multiple degrees. The goal of the Marine Technology program is to develop graduates ready to perform applied technical work in support of the marine industries involving the calibration, deployment, operation, maintenance and management of marine technology assets for use in the marine environment both offshore and onshore.
 - These degrees provide significant opportunities for work on shore-based infrastructure, piers, docks, tunnels, inland lakes, small and large vessels of opportunity, and offshore platforms.

- It is a much-needed technical program in a community that doesn't have a university nearby; and this is expressly authorized in statute.
- Our workforce development system, inclusive of all of our colleges (2-year, 4-year, public and private) must be on all hands on deck to ensure that employers have the right talent to fuel our economy.
 - The Maritime Technology Program at Northwestern Michigan College and Concrete Technology Program at Alpena Community College are shining examples of this
- If this bill were to be signed into law, the legislature would foreclose any future iteration of adapting a solution to respond to a specific and isolated workforce need.
 - Our workforce needs now in 2022 will not be the same in 2072 – and we shouldn't tie the hands of future employers and limit their solutions.
 - It would be foolish to permanently take away this tool out of the toolbox. Having flexible solutions to workforce problems – inclusive of an applied baccalaureate -- may help in attracting new industries that have the need for a very specific, niche skillset.
 - Given the announcements yesterday as well as the workforce shortages we are hearing about in every corner of the state, these bills are particularly ill-timed.
- Again, the applied baccalaureate degree is based on a community need, is workforce specific and provides a local and affordable access to students who would otherwise not have this option particularly in rural communities.
- It is what's important to students – geographic and financial access – that is too often left out of this discussion, and so at this time, I will turn it over to Dr. Joe Odenwald about the role of a rural community college in meeting specific workforce demands.

