



Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 118th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

House of Representatives

SPEECH OF
HON. GUS M. BILIRAKIS
OF FLORIDA

February 21, 2025

Mister Speaker,

The Hernando County School District has long been committed to providing high-quality education that prepares students for success in both academic and career pursuits. The district believes in the power of Career and Technical Education (CTE) to support students in achieving economic independence and contribute meaningfully to the community.

For its more than 23,000 students, the Hernando County School District offers a wide variety of CTE programs across 14 of the 16 career clusters identified by the Florida Department of Education. These programs provide students with a comprehensive education focused on technical, "soft" and industry specific skills in fields ranging from Healthcare, Information Technology, and Agriculture to Skilled Trades and Entrepreneurship. More than 86% of Hernando School's graduating seniors have participated in CTE programs, underscoring the district's commitment to introducing and expanding access to these rich and experiential courses that will inform students long after graduation. A fundamental component of the growth and popularity of CTE in the school district is the collaboration between the school district, local industries, governing agencies and workforce leaders. This partnership ensures there is alignment between the needs of employers and industry leaders to the school districts CTE program, strengthening the talent pipeline and highlighting employment opportunities within the community. As an example, Hernando Schools was an early adopter of the Space Academy initiative led by Space Florida. As an advocate for this exciting and novel initiative, in 2024, HCSD was one of 22 school districts named a Space Academy District to grow Space Industry momentum in Hernando County. A significant milestone for the expansion of Career and Technical Education was the opening of the Wilton Simpson Technical College, the first postsecondary site in the county. Wilton Simpson Technical College or "STC" will provide the community with access to advanced technical training and certification programs, expanding postsecondary educational opportunities in needed workforce industries. Through the use of voter approved millage funds, Hernando Schools demonstrates a commitment to ensuring this new facility is outfitted with cutting-edge resources to enhance a variety of programs.

The vision of the Hernando School District is to "grow our own" by providing educational pathways that lead to stable, rewarding, and local careers. We embrace our role and are honored to serve as a driving force for creating a healthy community through quality workforce education, strong partnerships with local leaders and as a proponent of forward-thinking industry initiatives that will position Hernando County as a lifelong home for residents. Hernando County is well positioned to be a place where education, industry, and community work hand-in-hand to create lasting success. Thank you, I yield back my time.

Gus M. Bilirakis
Member of Congress