

OHIO HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE

WRITTEN TESTIMONY

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As young children, my five siblings and I faced abuse and neglect. Our parents preferred alcohol and drugs over child-rearing. Many nights we went hungry and without running water for bathing or brushing our teeth.

The one constant in my life was education; I knew school was the way out of my situation.

I was 10 years old when my mother abandoned my siblings and me in a hotel room. Our father was in prison; we were placed in foster care. Over the next seven years, I went through three foster homes. I was kicked out of my last foster home when I turned 18 and couch-surfed or slept in my car as I finished my senior year of high school.

My first college experience ended after a year when funding cuts caused my aid to disappear. I persisted, finding another school and escaping homelessness when my now-wife's family took me in. That stability allowed me to earn my undergraduate degree.

My wife and I are parents of a wonderful 2-year-old son and I am determined to provide for him in all the ways I never had. I knew I needed a master's degree to advance in my career, but a traditional classroom would not work for me.

When I found WGU, I knew I had my solution. The unique programming allowed me to balance my work life and my family while also having time to get my degree. I needed a fully online school that could allow for a flexible schedule and WGU fit perfectly. At the end of April, I walked across the stage in Cincinnati to accept my MBA.

I share my story to show others that sometimes we have to stand up and overcome our circumstances to succeed. We must stop asking for change to happen to us and be the change we want to see. WGU has been wonderful in helping me do that and it can help others too.

I respectfully ask you to remove the amendments to the House Substitute Bill that would block Ohioans' access to needed financial aid that will allow them to overcome through education.