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Honorable Ryan Smith
Chair, Ohio House of Representatives Finance Committee
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Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Ryan, Ranking Member Cera, and members of the Ohio House of Representatives Finance Committee,

I am happy to be before you today to speak on behalf of students in Ohio's University system in support of House Bill 508, a bill that establishes the OhioCorps Pilot Project.

To introduce myself, my name is Daniel Palmer. I am currently the Chief Justice of Wright State University's Student Government Association, and the Executive Director of the Ohio Student Government Association. As the Executive Director for the Ohio Student Government Association, it is my job to advocate for the over 400,000 students in Ohio's 14 public institutions. In my capacity as Chief Justice and Executive Director, I have testified before the House Higher Education and Workforce Development Committee and the Ways and Means Committee several times when bills directly affect the students of Ohio.

The Opioid Crisis has directly impacted the youth of Ohio and America. Since 2012, the amount of Children in the foster care system has risen, with over 30% entering due to parental drug abuse. Additionally, children in households with parental drug abuse will be more likely to experience neglect or abuse. This highlights the severity of this issue and the urgency to act.

This bill is a step in the right direction to assisting those negatively impacted by the opioid crisis.

House Bill 508 will:

- Establish the OhioCorps Pilot Program in Southeast Ohio with the goal of steering "at-risk" children to a path of Higher Education through mentorship from university students,
- Establishes a scholarship for "at-risk" students that complete the OhioCorps Program and meet criteria, and
- Establishes the OhioCorps Fund.

For college students volunteering as mentors for these students, it could not be a more rewarding opportunity. We will be able to help those in need and assist them in achieving their dreams. It will also give us a new perspective. We often times read about the effects of the opioid crisis in Time Magazine or hear about it on the local news. Now we will be directly interacting with those affected and making a difference on this pressing issue.

This issue is close to my heart because my aunt is addicted to opiates and my uncle recently passed from a heroin overdose. It is important to realize that this epidemic affects all aspects of

society. Often times, we focus on the addict themselves and not the children or dependents of that addict. The children are often forgotten and continue that cycle their parents set forth.

I had the opportunity to speak at the press conference announcing this bill with Speaker Rosenberger, Representative Ryan, and Representative Reineke. All of us can attest to the resilience and bravery exhibited by the students of Waverly High School that have been negatively impacted by parental drug abuse. The reason we are here today discussing this bill is because of their advocacy and their mentor, Captain Crabtree, helping them along the way. Meeting them has impacted me and really put things into perspective. I could not even begin to comprehend the struggles they face as young adults. These teenagers would typically think that college is not a reality, but now we have the ability to change that belief.

OhioCorps will give “at-risk” children opportunities to receive a college education and be mentored along the way. I am sure that if given the chance, my cousins, and students in Ohio will utilize OhioCorps to open doors that may not have been open prior to this program. I am confident that this pilot program will show major benefits and be expanded in the near future.

To Close, I will leave you with a well-known quote from Nelson Mandela. He said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." Today marks the start of opening up opportunities for those that may not normally have the option to attend College. OhioCorps will give more that opportunity to seek a higher education to help bring the Change we seek.

Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Ryan, Ranking Member Cera, and members of the Ohio House of Representatives Finance Committee, I sincerely thank you for your time. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.