



**Senator Sandra Williams
21st Ohio Senate District**

**Senate Bill 209 Sponsor Testimony
Finance Committee
December 10, 2019**

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Burke, Ranking Member Sykes and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 209.

The “As-Introduced version” of Senate Bill 209 modified the purpose of a capital appropriation of \$350,000 made to the Facilities Construction Commission (FCC) in H.B. 529 of the 132nd G.A. to “Phillis Wheatley – Home for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care” from “Phillis Wheatley – Hunter’s Cove House.” This is funded out of the Cultural and Sports Facilities Building Fund (Fund 7030) under the FCC. The amendment I am introducing would fund the Phillis Wheatley –Home for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care out of the Mental Health Facilities Improvement Fund (Fund 7033) under the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

The Phillis Wheatley-Home for Youth Aging Out of Foster care will provide housing and support services for the many youth that age out of foster care each year. Similarly, the funding will be used to provide:

- Affordable housing for youth ages 18-24 years old
- A safe haven for homeless youth to receive hospitality, basics necessities and connect them with resources within the community
- Educational and job training assistance
- Wrap-around health and mental services.

According to the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System’s (AFCARS) Fiscal Year 2018 Preliminary report, there was an estimated 437,283 children living within the United States foster care system¹. Furthermore, the National Foster Youth Institute reported that more than 23,000 youth will age out

¹ <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/afcarsreport26.pdf>

of foster care each year². Many exit the foster care system without the proper financial and emotional support needed to succeed in life. A lack of financial, educational, and social support provided through the child welfare system can be detrimental to the wellbeing and prosperity of our most vulnerable population. These youth fare poorly compared to their peers across young adult domains, and become at risk for mental health problems, substance abuse, underemployment, and homelessness.

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Burke, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance committee, thank you for your time and I will be happy to answer questions the committee might have.

² <https://www.nfyi.org/51-useful-aging-out-of-foster-care-statistics-social-race-media/>