



House Bill 164 Proponent Testimony
House Finance Committee
October 4, 2023

Chair Edwards, Vice Chair LaRe, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the House Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit proponent testimony on House Bill 164. I am Ande Durojaiye, the Vice President and Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Applied Science at Miami University.

Recognizing the importance of helping all students at Miami University navigate their college experience, Miami has a number of financial resources and support programs in place to assist former foster care children. One such grant and scholarship program is the Miami Access Fellows. Designed to help make Miami University accessible, Miami Access Fellows is for new first-year academically competitive students who have a total family income that is equal to or less than \$35,000. Students are eligible for the program for up to four years and receive additional support services, including financial management and career development workshops. The university also participates in the Educational Training Voucher (ETV) Program, a federally-funded and state-administered initiative led by Foster Care to Success. ETV Program students can receive up to \$5,000 per year for five years based on the individual's financial need.

Students at Miami, such as former foster care children, who face unanticipated difficulties throughout their academic careers can also receive assistance through the Miami Cares Program. Miami Cares provides food resources, such as an on-campus food pantry and meal plan assistance, as well as housing opportunities to aid students with temporary emergency housing and students who may need housing over academic breaks. This program allows students to have the resources and support necessary to focus on their studies as they work towards graduation and enter Ohio's workforce.

Miami faculty and staff come together to assist students as they transition from foster care to college students. The Foster Care Alumni Network (Foster CAN) consists of a group of Miami professionals who periodically meet and have an interest in supporting this population of students. The university is also a participating member of Ohio Reach, a statewide network of higher education professionals, non-profit organizations, and others who support Ohio foster care students at colleges and universities throughout the state. Lastly, Miami welcomes students participating in Ohio Bridges, a program providing housing, education, employment, and well-being support services for young adults who were once in foster care.

House Bill 164, the Foster-to-College Scholarship Program, will complement the services currently available and provide additional financial support to former foster children pursuing higher education in Ohio. An already vulnerable population, this legislation will provide an additional resource for these young adults as they consider their future academic and career pathways.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony today.