



House Higher Education Committee
HB 164 – Establish Foster-to-College Scholarship Program
Proponent Testimony

Mike Rodgers
Associate Vice President of State Relations
The Ohio State University
June 7, 2023

Chair Young, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Miller, and members of the Ohio House Higher Education Committee—I am Mike Rodgers, Associate Vice President of state relations for The Ohio State University. I appreciate the opportunity to present written proponent testimony on House Bill 164, legislation that will establish the Foster-to-College Scholarship Program in Ohio.

As the flagship University for the state of Ohio, Ohio State strongly supports legislative efforts to increase accessibility and affordability within higher education. For example, during the 2021-2022 academic year, 9,400 students across all the university's campuses were a part of the Buckeye Opportunity Program. The Buckeye Opportunity Program ensures all eligible Ohio resident students who qualify for a federal Pell Grant receive enough student financial aid to cover the full cost of undergraduate tuition and mandatory fees.

In addition to programs like the Buckeye Opportunity Program, the Tuition Guarantee, and the Ohio College Opportunity Grant, we believe House Bill 164 can also play a vital role toward increasing accessibility and affordability by providing scholarships to some of Ohio's most disadvantaged students.

Based on the number of students who responded to the foster care question on the FASFA, Ohio State had 57 of these students in 2022, and 43 students in 2023. Many children in foster care must deal with a variety of challenges including interruptions in learning and having to transition to a different school. This is why 35 states, including neighboring West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, and that state up north, have all adopted legislation to provide scholarships to eligible students in foster care. We strongly support joining these neighbors and most other states around the nation in establishing this program.

I want to extend special appreciation to Representative Jarrells and Representative Seitz for their leadership on this issue. Their bipartisan work on this proposal is to be commended and is reflected in the large coalition of legislators who co-sponsored this bill. We are grateful for this important work to help more Ohio students realize their goal of one day going to college.

Ohio State's successes are Ohio's successes. By creating another pathway toward increased accessibility into higher education for Ohio's students, House Bill 164 will lead to more students choosing Ohio campuses, at a lower cost, and graduating with less debt.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written proponent testimony on House Bill 164 today. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.