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With iBELIEVE, where could I even start? It's not saying too much when I say that the years I've spent learning with and working with the iBELIEVE Foundation have been the most transformational years in my whole life. You couldn't have told rising-sophomore Ryan Exline going to his first iBELIEVE Summer Workshop in 2014 that 6 years later he'll be doing everything he can to give back to the organization that will give so much to him.

Let me tell you a little about my iBELIEVE experience. I had been introduced to iBELIEVE before ever coming to a workshop myself after dropping off and picking up my sister, Katie, from her first summer workshop. I have to say, just like anyone else who's ever had a "first time" seeing iBELIEVE, I was thinking, "what's up with all the music and dancing? This is weird..." Fast forward a year, and I got selected to go to workshop at Wright State; I thought I knew what I was getting into, but I had no idea how much I was going to grow and how badly I already wanted to go back when the week was over (shoutout to SH1 Council D). So, I went back next year, then I went back again the next year, but that was the last workshop; what next? I couldn't have been more ready and enthusiastic about joining the staff team, knowing how much my staff had helped me grow. If I could have a similar impact on even one delegate, it'd all be worth it. Four summer workshops later, I'm still here, and still loving every energizer and every activity we do. I'm personally a fan of helping delegates—and sometimes staff—figure out how many polar bears are around the ice hole. These years I've spent working with iBELIEVE have been the years I've grown the most, even as I've moved into a mentoring role as a staff member. That's one of the many great things about iBELIEVE: the growth never stops.

iBELIEVE helped me as a young high schooler from Jackson, Ohio to recognize there's more to me than just what everyone else sees. I was more than just "the smart kid," and iBELIEVE showed me how to embrace the things that I feel make me, me. Without iBELIEVE, I'm not sure I take on the growth mindset I needed to be part of The Ohio State University Marching Band, also known as TBDBITL; I was cut from the band my first year trying out, but I refused to let that stop me. I took what I had learned from getting cut, mixed it with my iBELIEVE knowledge, and took that forward into the next year. Three years later, I'm a third-year member of TBDBITL in M Row playing baritone, and I've performed everywhere from the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in New York City to the Rose Parade in Pasadena. Without the resiliency and the growth mindset I learned from working with iBELIEVE, I wouldn't have had these experiences, and they've been some of the greatest of my life.

iBELIEVE has committed so much to Appalachia, and it's a better place because of it. The number of outstanding individuals from across the region our programming has reached and spoken to has undoubtedly caused a wave of promise, hope, and enthusiasm for what we can accomplish as Appalachians. We always emphasize to our delegates that "the most important part about workshop is taking workshop home." I've seen firsthand the impact of spreading the message of leadership, kindness, and respect; these students are powerful and absolutely unstoppable in their mission to make their worlds a better place. This all isn't surprising in the slightest though; the people of iBELIEVE are what make it special and what makes the message spread. Seeing the growth in ourselves and our

delegates is what motivates people like me to continue giving back and continue growing as a leader. We're invested in the Foundation because we see the impact it has, and we're lucky to be a part of it.

November 18, 2020