



Testimony of Elizabeth Martinez

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Ohio

House Bill 33 – June 9th, 2023

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 33, specifically changes made earlier this week in the substitute bill that would negatively impact the work of Big Brothers Big Sisters Agencies across Ohio.

Over the past 5 budgets passed by the Ohio General Assembly, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Ohio has received funding in the amount of \$1 million per fiscal year to cover the cost of matches made by agencies across the state. We serve as a fiscal agent, providing funding to the nearly 20 BBBS agencies in Ohio and handling reporting requirements and administrative work in partnership with the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. Funds are used to support mentoring for children who have experienced an adverse childhood event (ACE), such as having an incarcerated parent. We have been able to make more than 500 matches each year since we began receiving these funds, with matches being made in every region of the state.

Earlier this week, this committee adopted a substitute bill that removed our funding for State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2025. It is my understanding that several organizations received a similar reduction. The loss of funding for SFY25 will adversely impact our ability to make and sustain matches. While I understand the need to ensure the long-term sustainability of TANF funds, BBBS has demonstrated that we are excellent stewards of taxpayer funding. Further, our mentoring model is internationally recognized as impactful to the littles we serve. In fact, many current and former members of the General Assembly have served as 'bigs' or been served as 'littles' through our agencies.

Positive mentoring relationships have been shown to improve the health and wellbeing of mentees and can also help address behavioral health issues that may arise. On behalf of Big Brothers Big Sisters agencies across the state, I want to say thank you for your past support and respectfully ask that you restore funding for Big Brothers Big Sisters in SFY25. Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.