



OHIO
UNIVERSITY

BEFORE THE SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

SENATOR MATT DOLAN, CHAIR

TESTIMONY

OF

CANDACE BOENINGER, VICE PRESIDENT FOR ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT

OHIO UNIVERSITY

JUNE 25, 2024



Chair Dolan, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Ohio Senate Finance Committee. Ohio University offers enthusiastic support for the Foster-to-College Scholarship Program proposed in Senate Bill (SB) 182, the Foster Care Education Support Act. This scholarship program expands access to Ohio's outstanding higher education ecosystem for some of the most vulnerable and deserving youth in our state, students our state's colleges and universities are prepared to welcome and proud to support.

We have seen time and again that foster care children face unique challenges accessing the state's public institutions due to limited resources and support networks. Families impacted by foster and kinship care often experience sustained economic hardship, making the expense associated with pursuing higher education even more challenging than what other families might experience. Many of the financial barriers faced by these youth would be mitigated by the Foster-to-College Scholarship Program, making their credential and degree attainment possible in a much more equitable way.

Through this program, our institutions can help extend a more stable pathway for students emerging from foster and kinship care. When we close the gap between available federal and state grants and the full cost of attendance on one of the state's residential campuses, for example, we absolutely can deliver an outstanding academic experience that helps level the playing field and prepares them for career success, but we also can welcome the students in to our communities of care—providing access to our institutions' residence halls, meal plans, and the excellent, robust student support services that distinguish Ohio's higher ed residential campuses.

In addition to its Athens campus, Ohio University's five regional campuses stand ready to welcome these students, providing the opportunity to remain in their communities while earning a top-notch degree, certificate or credential that can accelerate access to the state's workforce.

Investing in and furthering the education of foster care youth in Ohio is an investment in the future of our state. At institutions like OHIO, caring faculty and staff will welcome foster care youth into our communities and support them on their path to academic success, successful career outcomes and a brighter future. By breaking down financial barriers and providing support through the Foster-to-College Scholarship Program, together we can empower these resilient youth to contribute to our state's overall growth and prosperity. Please provide your support for SB 182.