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**Majority Floor Leader Bill Seitz
The Ohio House of Representatives**

Sponsor Testimony for HB 164: Establish Foster-to-College Scholarship Program

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on HB 164 in concert with my joint sponsor Representative Jarrells. I have little to add to his excellent explanation of the reason behind this bill. I would note that the scholarships are only for youth that are in foster home situations from and after the time they attain the age of 13. I would also note that the scholarship language is broad enough to include scholarships for trade schools, community colleges, and four-year institutions of higher education.

The concerns that I have had for the wellbeing of foster children are long and go back decades. For example, I have consistently supported supplemental benefits and housing for foster children that age out at age 18 in order to help them make the transition to responsible adulthood. I believe foster children operate under tremendous disadvantages, even when placed in loving foster homes, simply because so many of them move from foster home to foster home and have greater difficulty establishing relationships that are common to those who are blessed to have been in a single home situation throughout their youth.

The amount of money we propose to spend is modest, but a firm step forward in helping some of the most vulnerable of our young people be able to achieve the higher education outcomes that will facilitate a productive life. I urge you to support this bill.

HB 164 received unanimous support from the House Higher Education Committee. Several of our four-year universities have also expressed support for this bill including Ohio State, Kent State, and the University of Cincinnati. It's worth noting, that recently, the Governor, in partnership with Ohio Reach and the Ohio Children's Alliance (OCA), launched the Ohio Reach postsecondary designation for providing supportive services to students with a history in foster care. This new designation, in tandem with this legislation, will ensure that foster youth have a meaningful path to higher education here in Ohio.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony on this legislation, we'd be happy to answer any questions that the committee has at this time.