

Senate Finance Committee

November 12, 2024

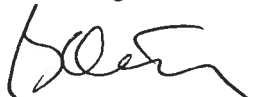
Chair Dolan, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes, and distinguished members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify in favor of Senate Bill 182.

As a pediatrician in the Fostering Connections program at Nationwide Children's Hospital, I care for a large number of teens who are in foster care (from all over the state of OH) many of whom will age out of foster care at age 18. As part of providing complete health care, we spend time talking with teens about their future and helping them gather the tools to be successful as they enter young adulthood. We do so because we know that it is a difficult road for these teens and that the statistics are sobering. Of the youth aging out, approximately 25% will become homeless by the age of 26 (compared to 4% of general population), 26% will be incarcerated by age 21 (compared to 0.06% of general population) and only 66% will get their high school diploma or GED by the time they are 21 (compared to 89% of the general population). Through no fault of their own these teens have already faced so many uphill struggles and Senate Bill 182 allows them to access a smoother path. With appropriate resources, they can have hope to achieve their dreams of pursuing a trade or college degree. For teens who are adopted from foster care, the [Foster-to-College Scholarship program](#) will help relieve the financial burden of attending post-secondary school, especially since adoptive families will not have had opportunity to prepare for this cost.

A story about one of my patients might underline how useful such a program could be. DA entered foster care in 2019 because of parental substance abuse, physical abuse and neglect. As a result, she battled with significant mental health issues including suicidal thoughts and an attempt. In the stable and nurturing care of her foster parent and with consistent mental health care, she was able to manage her trauma and depression. She is now attending a prestigious Ohio university where she hopes to embark on a path to be a neurosurgeon. She has many hurdles still but with the assistance of SB182, one of those barriers (financial assistance) will be diminished.

HB164 and its companion SB182 present an opportunity to change the trajectory and invest in these youth who have already endured so much. Ohio's House of Representatives has already shown their support for HB164. In June, it passed resoundingly, 85 to 5. Now, the bill rests with Ohio's Senate. I urge Ohio's Senators to pass this legislation and create the Foster-to-College Scholarship program. This is an investment that will pay dividends for generations.

Warm Regards,



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