



Dave Thomas
Foundation
for Adoption®

Forever Families for Children in Foster Care

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 and House Bill 164.

More than [3,500](#) children are waiting to be adopted from foster care in Ohio right now and nearly [1,000](#) young people will age out this year. The Dave Thomas Foundation is committed to dramatically increasing the number of adoptions so that children will have safe, permanent homes before they age out. Ohio has an opportunity to pass new legislation to enact the [Foster-to-College Scholarship program](#), which will make adoption more accessible to families. By covering the cost of attending any post-secondary or workforce training for students who were in foster care as teenagers, the program relieves the financial burden placed on adoptive families and empowers them to support all their children, including those who were adopted.

The cost of college has [increased significantly](#), forcing parents to save for years. Families considering adopting a teenager face a dilemma: How can we support each of our children to pursue their dreams, even if we haven't been saving for it? This program will give parents the ability to help all their children reach their highest aspiration, regardless of their savings. The fact is, many parents cannot afford to save at all, and must take on debt to support their children. For families considering adopting a teenager, relieving the financial burden of education loans in the future will make adoption more feasible today.

HB164 and its companion SB182 present an opportunity to invest in children who have endured abuse and neglect and experienced trauma, grief and loss in their lives. With the support of caring [adults](#), young people can overcome these adverse childhood experiences and become thriving adults who give back to their community. Because this program would offer financial support for all types of workforce training beyond just a college degree, it will support young people to achieve a vision for their future, whatever their aspirations may be. And having [hope](#) in their future helps young people stay on a positive and constructive path throughout their teenage years.

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. We urge Ohio's Senators to pass this legislation and create the Foster-to-College Scholarship program. As we race against the clock to ensure that all children have a permanent home, I urge our legislators to view this proposal with urgency. Ohio is a thriving state and this is an investment that will pay dividends for generations.