

March 4, 2025

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Chair Fowler Arthur, Vice Chair Odioso, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the House Education Committee. Thank you for allowing me to offer remarks today.

I am here to ask you to include amendment HC0158 to HB 96 that would provide \$2.75 million per fiscal year to Junior Achievement. This funding will expand JA's impact statewide, ensuring that every student has access to resources that empower them to create actionable career plans and contribute to Ohio's workforce. It will support JA areas that serve all 88 counties and help to expand critical work-readiness, financial literacy, and entrepreneurship programming.


I am submitting amendment HC0158 along with my testimony. This amendment encompasses all six Junior Achievement regions in Ohio: North Central Ohio, Central Ohio, Greater Cleveland, Eastern Ohio, Northwestern Ohio, and the OKI Partners, which serves Southwest and Western Ohio. Together, these organizations cover the entire state.

Imagine a world where every student graduates from high school with the knowledge to help them make smart financial decisions, with the mindset of an entrepreneur, and the skills they need to thrive in their career. In this world our young people would be graduating with the skillsets, and mindsets that they need to build the best lives for themselves, their families, and their communities. At Junior Achievement this is our why, and we work every day to inspire young people to own their future success and become a more capable future workforce.

Over more than eight decades Junior Achievement has impacted the lives of millions of K-12th students across Ohio by providing hands-on programming that utilizes experiential learning to connect real-world concepts to education. Today JA delivers more than 164,000 student experiences in Ohio per year with nearly 900,000 instructional hours spent with students. Furthermore, by partnering with hundreds of organizations across the state to provide volunteers that bring their own personal and professional experience to our proven curriculum, students connect what they are learning to practical applications for their future and the outcomes speak for themselves.

Regarding our partners, I would like to request that the Committee review the letters of support that Junior Achievements has received from various stakeholders across the state. These letters have been submitted by CEOs, chambers of commerce, small business owners, bank officials, students, local government partners, and educational service centers. Collectively, these organizations acknowledge the essential services that Junior Achievements provide to their communities that contribute to their own workforce development.

A recent IPSOS study on the impact of JA programming shows that more than half of alumni credit JA with positively influencing their work ethic (57%) and career choices (56%). Alumni of JA earn more money, they are more satisfied in their careers, they are more likely to start their own business, and they have higher levels of educational attainment than the general population. Nine in ten JA Alumni report that the program played an important role in shaping their belief they can achieve their goals. Combined, these data points paint a picture where small businesses are thriving, families are earning



more money and paying off debts sooner, allowing them to invest more in their home and community, and career exploration is leading to the discovery of career passions creating a talent pipeline for the future of our communities.

Over the years I have been privileged to experience the impact of JA's programming firsthand. I have spoken to many alumni who say that they are business owners today because of their JA experience, that JA led them to become first time college graduates, and that they discovered what they wanted to be when they grew up because of JA. These few stories are but a handful of the millions of students impacted over the decades. These stories are my why, but so many students across Ohio do not have access to JA's programming currently. That is why I am testifying today in support of amendment HC0158 to expand the reach of JA across Ohio.

Thank you for your time and for the opportunity to provide this testimony in support of the schools and students that Junior Achievement serves.

H. B. No. 96
As Introduced

_____ moved to amend as follows:

In the table on line 104509, after row AA, insert:

"

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|-------|--------|---------------------|---|-------------|-------------|
| A GRF | 200597 | Program and Project | | \$2,750,000 | \$2,750,000 |
| | | Support | | | |

"

In table on line 104509, in rows AC and BZ, add \$2,750,000 to each fiscal year.

After line 105557, insert:

"Section 265.275. PROGRAM AND PROJECT SUPPORT

The foregoing appropriation item 200597, Program and Project Support, shall be used for purposes of the section of this act entitled "FINANCIAL LITERACY AND WORKFORCE READINESS PROGRAMMING INITIATIVE."

After line 105912, insert:

| | |
|--|----|
| "Section 265.650. FINANCIAL LITERACY AND WORKFORCE | 14 |
| READINESS PROGRAMMING INITIATIVE | 15 |
| (A) The Financial Literacy and Workforce Readiness | 16 |
| Programming Initiative is established within the Department of | 17 |
| Education and Workforce. The Programming Initiative shall | 18 |
| operate in fiscal years 2026 and 2027. The purpose of the | 19 |
| Programming Initiative is to ensure the next generation's | 20 |
| preparedness in financial literacy, workforce or career | 21 |
| readiness, entrepreneurship, and other relevant skills to enter | 22 |
| and be competitive in Ohio's future workforce economy. | 23 |
| (B) (1) The Department shall distribute appropriated funds | 24 |
| to the following organizations as part of the Programming | 25 |
| Initiative: | 26 |
| (a) Junior Achievement of North Central Ohio; | 27 |
| (b) Junior Achievement of Greater Cleveland; | 28 |
| (c) Junior Achievement of Eastern Ohio; | 29 |
| (d) Junior Achievement of Northwestern Ohio; | 30 |
| (e) Junior Achievement of OKI Partners; | 31 |
| (f) Junior Achievement of Central Ohio. | 32 |
| (2) The participating organizations listed under division | 33 |
| (B) (1) of this section shall collaborate with local schools, | 34 |
| institutions of higher education, local, regional, and statewide | 35 |
| employers and businesses, subject matter experts, community- | 36 |
| based organizations, and other public-private entities or | 37 |
| agencies to implement the Programming Initiative. | 38 |
| (C) The Programming Initiative shall do all of the | 39 |
| following: | 40 |

(1) Place specific emphasis on engagement with students, 41
 teachers, and schools primarily located in underserved 42
 communities, under-resourced rural areas, or those with 43
 populations considered economically disadvantaged; 44

(2) Increase capacity and resources that expand each of 45
 the participating organizations' collective ability to offer 46
 more financial literacy, workforce readiness and 47
 entrepreneurship, or related programming such as work-based 48
 learning experiences designed to engage more students in the 49
 geographic areas to which the participating organizations 50
 provide services; 51

(3) Increase the number of students measurably impacted 52
 by the participating organizations' services and increase the 53
 number of counties where services are offered; 54

(4) Assist students enrolled in any of grades nine through 55
 twelve with direct entry into the workforce, access to higher 56
 education, or in-demand job training; 57

(5) Assist participating students in creating and 58
 implementing career pathways; 59

(6) Strengthen each participating organization's capacity 60
 and resources to collectively provide up to ten student-focused 61
 engagement events involving students and teachers from multiple 62
 schools and communities in northeast and central portions of the 63
 state. The engagement events shall do both of the following: 64

(a) Enhance and deepen participating students' ability to 65
 demonstrate mastery of financial literacy, workforce or career 66
 readiness, entrepreneurship, or related skills and knowledge 67
 vital to equipping and preparing students with the requisite 68
 skills, competencies, and knowledge to be competitive for in- 69

demand jobs within the state and global workforce economy, 70
 particularly those that are considered high-growth jobs in the 71
 state of Ohio; 72

(b) Be offered to all partnering schools and respective 73
 students; however, the emphasis shall remain on the engagement 74
 of students and schools that meet the conditions prescribed 75
 under division (C) (1) of this section." 76

Update the title, amend, enact, or repeal clauses accordingly 77

The motion was _____ agreed to.

SYNOPSIS 78

Financial Literacy and Workforce Readiness Programming Initiative 79 80

Section 265.650 81

Establishes the Financial Literacy and Workforce Readiness 82
 Programming Initiative within DEW to operate in FY 2026 and FY 83
 2027 to ensure the next generation's preparedness in the skills 84
 necessary to enter and be competitive in the future economy. 85

Department of Education and Workforce 86

Sections 265.10 and 265.275 87

Establishes GRF ALI 200597, Program and Project Support, 88
 with an appropriation of \$2,750,000 in each fiscal year, and 89
 requires that this appropriation be used for the Financial 90
 Literacy and Workforce Readiness Programming Initiative. 91