

**Matthew Smith**

Jackson High School Student | Massillon Ohio  
House Education Committee | March 4, 2025

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.

On behalf of myself and Junior Achievement of North Central Ohio, we would like to thank you for allowing us to speak today. My name is Matthew Smith, a student from Massillon, OH, who attends Jackson High School. I have had the opportunity to be a part of a number of sports and activities; however, the most impactful part of my high school career has been Junior Achievement. Getting the opportunity to learn a multitude of lessons and skills has been an invaluable experience. I am here today 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. The funding will support programs in all 88 counties.

Throughout my three years within the Junior Achievement Company Program, I have learned countless different lessons and skills shaping me as an individual and preparing me for my professional career. The most influential lesson I learned through JA was failure. For many, failure is seen as a negative experience, however I learned to take failure and use it to propel me forward for growth and opportunity. There were many instances throughout my JA experiences where I failed, I felt defeated, I wanted to quit, and I wanted to just give up. However, I knew that if I took this path I would only fail myself, thus I had to bounce back and work even harder to accomplish my goals throughout the program. A prime example of this was my first year in the program. Our company successfully brought a product to market and created a thriving business, but in many ways we had points where we failed to execute a task, failed to delegate/lead, and failed to adapt, these were just a few of many failures. Coming back for my second year of the program I applied these failures and used the new opportunity of a new year to make these weak points a success. From the outside, many saw this year as a success, yet on the inside were so many failures to be improved upon. Coming back for year three, I realize that I will never have perfection; but, what I can do is build upon failures, learn lessons, and move forward. Failure is inevitably part of life and learning to capitalize and overcome it has been just one of the many valuable lessons Junior Achievement has taught me and a testament to the impact it has had on my life.

As a Senior in High School, at just the age of 17, I am entering college having opportunities that I am confident the majority of my peers have not had. The experience of different roles in three student-created companies – I have held Finance, Marketing, and CEO roles – that have built my confidence and my skills in areas such as public speaking, leadership, compromise, negotiation, web design, sales strategy, marketing and design, and countless other areas.

Junior Achievement's outstanding High School programming provided me with these opportunities and skills. I want future students to have the amazing opportunities I've been lucky enough to be a part of with JA. Today, I am asking you to support this bill that would allow the expansion of JA's programs to other Ohio students like myself.

Thank you.