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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.

My name is **Luis Salazar**, and I am a business teacher at **Withrow High School** in **Cincinnati Public Schools**. I am here today to **strongly advocate for the inclusion of amendment HC0158 to HB 96**, which would provide **\$2.75 million per fiscal year to Junior Achievement (JA)**. This funding is critical to expanding JA's impact across **all 88 counties in Ohio**, ensuring that every student—regardless of their background—has access to essential resources that **empower them to create actionable career plans and contribute meaningfully to Ohio's workforce**.

In my experience, **Junior Achievement and their Innovation Generation (I-Gen) program, have been transformative for my students**. These programs go beyond traditional classroom instruction, providing hands-on **entrepreneurial and career-readiness experiences**. Through JA, my students have had the opportunity to **develop business ideas, work with industry mentors, and apply real-world skills** that will serve them well beyond high school. The impact is undeniable—students gain **confidence, financial literacy, and a problem-solving mindset** that prepares them not just for jobs, but for **successful careers and business ventures**.

For students, these programs offer **real-world business exposure, professional networking, and soft skills development**, which are **critical for success in today's workforce**. Teachers, in turn, benefit from **engaging, interactive curricula that align with academic standards**, as well as access to **business professionals who provide mentorship and industry insights**. Schools that integrate JA and I-Gen enjoy **stronger partnerships with local businesses, higher student engagement, and a competitive edge in workforce development**. These programs are **proven bridges between education and economic opportunity**, equipping students with the tools they need to **thrive in a rapidly changing job market**.

The funding proposed in **HB 96 would allow JA to expand these invaluable programs statewide**, reaching more students and **ensuring that every young person in Ohio has access to the resources, mentorship, and experiences needed to achieve career success**. Without this investment, many students—especially those in under-resourced schools—will **miss out on life-changing opportunities** that could shape their futures. By



supporting this amendment, you are not just funding a program; you are **investing in the future leaders, entrepreneurs, and innovators of Ohio.**

I urge this committee to **support amendment HC0158 to HB 96 to fund Junior Achievement at \$2.75 million per fiscal year.** This investment will **pay dividends for Ohio's economy by preparing the next generation of skilled professionals and business leaders.**

Thank you for your time and consideration. I appreciate the opportunity to speak on behalf of my students and their futures.

Luis Salazar