



Statement before the Ohio House of Representatives Committee on
Education

On Senate Bill 156

Title: Break the Cycle of Disadvantage by Teaching the Success Sequence

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To Chairman Arthur, Vice Chair Odioso, Ranking Member Brennan and the esteemed members of the House Education Committee, my name is Ian Rowe.

I join you today as a Senior Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, where my research focuses on the factors that drive upward mobility, with a particular emphasis on education, work, family formation and how best to ensure the rising generation learns the pathways most likely to lead to economic prosperity.

I also put theory and research into action. For the last fifteen years, I have led public charter schools at the elementary, middle and high school levels in low-income communities in the Bronx, New York, educating predominantly black and Hispanic students. I have had the privilege of educating thousands of children, from families similar to Ohio parents, who simply want schools to educate their children on how to break the cycle of disadvantage.

SB156 requires the Ohio department of education and workforce to develop standards and a model curriculum about the success sequence for grades six to twelve. The success sequence is data that shows if a young person completes at least a high school degree; then gets a full-time job of any kind so they learn the dignity and discipline of work, and waits to have children until marriage, 97% of millennials who follow this sequence in that order avoid poverty. The vast majority enter the middle class or beyond.

The success sequence has bi-partisan support, as it has been championed by progressive and conservative organizations.

Why is this information important for kids to learn? Throughout my career, I have worked with students from every imaginable background who grew up in challenging situations—domestic violence, poverty, father absence—but succumbed to those conditions and unfortunately recreated them upon entering young adulthood, thus perpetuating the cycle of degradation. Sadly, we have all seen this.

But I have also seen kids under those same exact conditions develop a future orientation for their lives, which leads them to make different sets of decisions that put them on a different trajectory to break the cycle of disadvantage. The question is what makes the difference?”

That has become the animating question of my life.

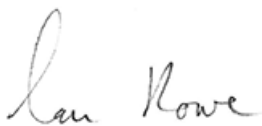
My observation is that students that have been able to break the cycle of disadvantage typically made key choices during what we call the life-deciding decade between the ages of 14 and 24. The quality of decisions made during that period of time - particularly choices around education, work, relationships and when to start a family - have huge influence over the quality of the rest of your life.

This is why at the high school I founded, Vertex Partnership Academies, we teach the success sequence to provide young people with a roadmap to economic stability and how to avoid poverty. And it

works. In a five year federally funded random control trial of the *Love Notes curriculum that teaches the success sequence*, researchers at the University of Louisville, found that at-risk youth in the *Love Notes* group were 46% less likely to get pregnant compared to the control group a year post instruction. And roughly 80% of black young adults who followed the sequence entered the middle or higher-income bracket, significantly boosting their economic standing.

If we are committed to reducing poverty, reducing inequality and fostering upward mobility, we have to put family structure on par with our emphasis on education and work. We have a moral responsibility to let young people, especially those struggling, know that their life and that of their future children can be their own. But we have to let them know how. Passage of SB156 can be an important step towards that goal.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ian Rowe".

Resources on the Success Sequence

- [A Proven Path to the American Dream](#)
- [Success Sequence - A Synthesis of the Literature](#)
- [The Millennial Success Sequence](#)
- Brookings Institution ([Creating Opportunity for Forgotten Americans](#))

- Heritage Foundation ([Empowering Every Child: Unveiling the Success Sequence Model For Success in Both School and Life](#)).