



February 16, 2026

To: House Education Committee

From: David Mahan

Policy Executive Director
Center for Christian Virtue

Re: SB156 proponent testimony

To Chair Fowler-Arthur, Vice Chair Odioso, Ranking Member Brennan and the esteemed members of the House Education Committee, my name is David Mahan and I am the Policy Executive Director for The Center for Christian Virtue, Ohio's largest Christian public policy organization. Today I am testifying in support of SB156, which will require that children be taught the "Success Sequence", a proven formula to help young adults avoid poverty and achieve the American Dream.

In addition to my policy role at CCV, I've spent over 20 years working with students from a variety of backgrounds from detention centers to public schools. I benefit from first-hand experience of delivering content to thousands of students and teachers over the years from inner-city, rural, and suburban communities, and it is from this perspective that I testify today.

"How many want to have a great marriage and family one day?" This is a question that I would ask just about every group of students that I presented to across the country, and I was always encouraged to find that the overwhelming majority of kids would raise their hands. Despite the insanity that many of them see glorified in pop culture, as well as the challenging experiences they may have observed in their own families, there is still a deeply rooted desire to do better for themselves, and part of

doing better still includes marriage, family, and personal responsibility. However, getting from where they find themselves today to where they want to be in life requires a lot of guidance, especially as it relates to making the healthy choices and building the healthy relationships necessary to achieve such goals. The Success Sequence is a powerful tool that educators can use to reinforce, and in some cases realign the goals and aspirations of their students.

The National Longitudinal survey is a project of the US Bureau of Labor and Statistics. According to their website, “the [survey] consists of a nationally representative sample of 8,984 men and women born during the years 1980 through 1984 and living in the United States at the time of the initial survey in 1997. Participants were ages 12 to 16 as of December 31, 1996. Interviews were conducted annually from 1997 to 2011 and biennially since then. **The ongoing cohort has been surveyed 21 times as of date. Data are available from Round 1 (1997–98) through Round 20 (2021–22).**”¹ The Success Sequence stems from this body of data and the findings of diverse and reputable institutions such as The Brookings Institute, the American Enterprise Institute, the Institute for Family Studies, and Federal Government agencies, that consistently found that 97% of individuals who complete at least a high school education, obtain full-time employment, marry before having children, do not live in poverty in adulthood.

This is tremendous news for young adults in general, but what does the data say about disadvantaged populations? 94% of young adults from low-income families and 95% of young adults from non-intact families who followed the success sequence are not poor. While the data does reveal that Black and Hispanic individuals are more negatively impacted than White individuals when they **do not** follow all three steps, that race gap is almost completely closed when they **do**. 95% of Black and Hispanic young adults who follow the success sequence are not poor, and over 80% are in the middle or higher income bracket.² With results like these, it’s no wonder that the vast majority of parents support teaching the Success

¹ <https://www.bls.gov/nls/nlsy97.htm>

² <https://ifstudies.org/ifs-admin/resources/reports/successsequencedisadvantagedya-final.pdf>

Sequence to their children.³

In closing, while the infamous “M” word (Marriage) seems to be the focal point of political consternation these days, it hasn’t always been this way. In fact, it was former President Barack Obama that said the following in his 2008 Father’s Day address, **“Of all the rocks upon which we build our lives, we are reminded today that family is the most important, and we are called to recognize and honor how critical every father is to that foundation... But if we are honest with ourselves, we’ll admit that what too many fathers also are is missing—missing from too many lives and too many homes... You and I know how true this is in the African-American community. We know that more than half of all black children live in single-parent households, a number that has doubled—doubled—since we were children... And the foundations of our community are weaker because of it.”**⁴ Strong societies are built upon the foundation of strong families, and Ohio families are in crisis. Children deserve to know that regardless of the cards they were dealt in life, they have it well within their power to adopt the mindsets and habits that lead to the successful families that they all want, and Ohio needs.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

The Center for Christian Virtue (CCV) is a non-profit, non-partisan organization that endeavors to create an Ohio where God’s blessings of life, family, and religious freedom are treasured, respected, and protected. www.ccv.org -- (513) 733-5775

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<https://www.aei.org/research-products/report/uncommonly-popular-public-support-for-teaching-the-success-sequence-in-school/>

⁴ <https://www.politico.com/story/2008/06/text-of-obamas-fatherhood-speech-011094>