

March 11, 2025

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Chair Stewart, Vice Chair Dovilla, Ranking Member Rose Sweeney, and members of the House Finance 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 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.

This amendment, which is attached to my testimony, 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.

Before discussing Junior Achievement's impact on Ohio students and the benefits of this funding for the workforce, let's consider trees. In the 1980s, researchers built Biosphere 2 in Arizona to create a closed ecosystem. They found that while the trees grew tall, they eventually fell over even though those trees received everything they needed – adequate water, fertile soil, ample sunlight, generous space. What did the researchers miss? Wind: The trees needed wind.

Wind bends and stresses trees in a way that, through experience, gives them the understanding of where to firmly plant their roots – an exercise that through exposure and repetition grants them a long, happy, sustainable life. Even with water, soil, sunlight, and space, even a tree can only prosper with a little bit of exposure and experience.

Perhaps Ohio's students aren't much different than trees. Junior Achievement provides a robust curriculum aligned with Ohio's existing career demands, dedicated educators, technological tools, and preparation for the workforce. But why are students still exiting Ohio after high school at a rate over 10%? Perhaps they need more wind; the opportunities, role models, exposure, and experiences that Junior Achievement offers.

For over more than eight decades Junior Achievement has impacted the lives of millions of K-12 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.

According to a recent IPSOS study, more than half of JA alumni credit JA with positively influencing their work ethic (57%) and career choices (56%). They earn more money, are more satisfied with their careers, are more likely to start their own business, and have higher levels of educational attainment than the general population.

In closing, I'd like to ask the Committee to not just take it from me but also review the many letters of support we received from a variety of our stakeholders we submitted as written testimony. They also believe that with a little more wind, Ohio students and their roots will continue to grow in 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.

In the table on line 104509, after row AA, insert:	1
"	2
	3

After line 105557, insert: 7

"Section 265.275. PROGRAM AND PROJECT SUPPORT 8

After line 105912, insert: 13

"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** 79 **Initiative** 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