

Mustafa Chouaib
Junior Achievement of Northwestern Ohio
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Chair Stewart, Vice Chair Dovilla, Ranking Member Sweeney, and Respected Representatives, I would like to first begin by thanking you all for having me and taking the time to hear my testimony. I am here before you to talk about how Junior Achievement impacted my life and to advocate for the inclusion of amendment HC0158 to HB 96, which would provide \$2.75 million per fiscal year to Junior Achievement (JA).

My name is Mustafa Chouaib. I'm from Toledo, Ohio, and I'm currently studying electrical engineering at the University of Toledo. From a young age, about the time I was in middle school, I knew that I wanted to become an electrical engineer, but at the time, if you were to ask me what an electrical engineer is or what they do or even where they work, I wouldn't have known how to answer any of those questions. Fast forward to my senior year of high school, I still had no real experience in an engineering work environment, and I probably still couldn't answer those three simple questions. I recall my engineering teacher telling us that an organization, Junior Achievement, in association with an engineering firm, The JDI Group, would be coming in to give us a series of classes on professionalism in the workplace and that at the end there would be a summer internship opportunity offered. I remember thinking about the internship as if it was unrealistic for me or far away, but the idea of it stayed in the back of my head.

As the classes came to an end, they handed out applications to the internship, and I ended up applying then interviewing a few days later. After the interview process, I ended up getting the internship and was set to start right after graduating high school. I still remember my first day was June 6th, 2022. I walked in with absolutely no experience in an office environment or in the programs used or even the kind of work that they did. In that summer, I ended up learning about electrical system design, as well as how to use industry standard modeling softwares like AutoCAD and Revit. These were skills that were invaluable for someone like me who hadn't yet stepped foot on a college campus and having them put me 100 steps ahead of my peers. Keep in mind, an internship like the one that I was able to get through the high school JA program was something that engineering students aren't exposed to until the end of their second year in college.

At the end of summer internship, I was offered a part time position to continue to work at The JDI Group while I was going through college. I even eventually took my mandatory internships/co-ops for college with The JDI Group a year before any of my peers. This internship opportunity was just the beginning of how Junior Achievement helped me.

Through Junior Achievement, I was awarded scholarships that are helping me get through college debt free. Through Junior Achievement, I was able to meet and talk to professionals in different industries. Through Junior Achievement, I can now help those children and young adults that are in the very position that I was once in as I am now a JA board member. Junior Achievement not only helped me develop my career, but JA also helped me become a better professional and leader. I can confidently say that the opportunities presented to me through Junior Achievement have changed my life, and that the work that JA does continues to change the lives of countless Ohioan youth.

I conclude my testimony by again thanking you, the Respected Committee, for listening as well as Junior Achievement for all that they have done for me and what they continue to do every day for the youth of Ohio and America.