

Evan Wolaver  
Junior Achievement of Northwestern Ohio  
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Chair Stewart, Vice Chair Dovilla, Ranking Member Sweeney, and House Finance Committee, thank you all for taking the time to hear my testimony. I am here 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 Evan Wolaver. I am from Perrysburg, Ohio, and 2 years ago, when I was getting ready to graduate from Perrysburg High School, I had so many interests and dreams of what I wanted to do that I was lost. I didn't have a clear path. I felt pressured to go to college, but it didn't make me happy.

This unrest eventually led me to take a gap semester out of high school to focus on recovering from some health issues that I was dealing with. I spent the next year working at Costco, pushing carts. I was miserable and lost. I had no direction and knew I was meant for more. The following semester, I took classes part-time at the University of Toledo, studying Business and Innovation.

The classes I took at UT were not that valuable to me. I was taking my prerequisites, which had nothing to do with business. I just felt like I was in high school all over again. After spring break, my mom sent me a link to the Junior Achievement 5th Year Program. Little did I know that this opportunity would completely redirect my life by providing valuable life skills, a goal-oriented career path, and, most importantly, a meaningful transition from high school to independence.

I began my 5th Year by Junior Achievement journey, in collaboration with Lourdes University, in August 2024. After only spending a couple of months in the program, I felt like I had gained 10 times the amount of value in JA than I did a semester of College. Through our sessions to date, I have learned personal finance and budgeting, garnered real-life and professional skills, and learned how to live independently through campus life.

The most valuable aspect of JA is their ability to easily match recent high school students or graduates with internships. JA aligned me with my first-semester internship at 13 ABC News, where I learned video editing, camera work, script writing, and professional skills not taught in schools. From this experience, I was able to walk away with more connections, an editing portfolio reel, and a solid understanding of videography skills. I am now completing my second-semester internship at the MadAveGroup marketing agency. I'm learning the value of developing an idea and executing it through effective scheduling, sticking to a timeline, and collaborating with the team.

The experience given to me by Junior Achievement, has made me feel confident about my next steps. Social media is where the attention is now and it'll stay that way.

Goldman Sachs Research predicts the “total addressable market of the creator economy could roughly double over the next five years to \$480 billion by 2027 from \$250 billion today.”

1% of \$480 billion comes out at \$4.8 million. After graduating from 5th Year, I plan to take advantage of this market, utilizing the skills given to me by Junior Achievement.

Members of the House Finance Committee, think about what Junior Achievement could do with a couple million dollars.