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House Finance Committee March 11, 2025

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.

My name is Patrick Closser and I am a business owner, Junior Achievement volunteer and board member, and the Mayor of London, OH. I am here today to strongly advocate for the inclusion of amendment HC0158 to HB 96, which would provide \$2.75 million per fiscal year to Junior Achievement (JA). This funding is critical to expanding JA's impact across all 88 counties in Ohio, ensuring that every student regardless of their background—has access to essential resources that empower them to create actionable career plans and contribute meaningfully to Ohio's workforce.

In my experience, Junior Achievement programs have been transformative for our students. Through JA, students have the opportunity to develop business ideas, work with industry mentors, and apply real-world skills that will serve them well in life. The impact is undeniable—students gain confidence, financial literacy, and a problem-solving mindset that prepares them not just for jobs, but for successful careers and business ventures.

For students, these programs offer real-world business exposure, professional networking, and base financial literacy, which are critical for success in today's workforce. Teachers gain valuable advantages through engaging with business professionals for mentorship and industry knowledge. Schools that integrate JA enjoy stronger partnerships with local businesses, higher student engagement, and a competitive edge in workforce development. These programs are proven bridges between education and economic opportunity.

The funding proposed in HB 96 would allow JA to expand these invaluable programs statewide, reaching more students and ensuring that every young person in Ohio has access to the resources, mentorship, and experiences needed to achieve career success. Without this investment, many students—especially those in under-resourced schools—will miss out on life-changing opportunities. By supporting this amendment, you are not just funding a program; you are investing in the future leaders, entrepreneurs, and innovators of Ohio.

For five weeks each year, I witness firsthand the transformative power of Junior Achievement. The smiles and enthusiasm from the children I teach are a testament to the program's success. With additional funding, we could expand our reach and bring these impactful experiences to a wider audience. I urge this committee to support amendment HC0158 to HB96 to fund Junior Achievement at \$2.75 million per fiscal year.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I appreciate the opportunity to speak on behalf of my students and their futures.

Patrick J. Closser, Mayor