



Substitute House Bill 96
Written Proponent Testimony of Travis Gulling
Simon Kenton Council

Chairman Stewart, Vice Chairman Dovilla, Ranking Member Sweeney, and Members of the House Finance Committee,

On behalf of the Simon Kenton Council of Scouting America, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of House Bill 96. As the CEO of the Simon Kenton Council, I would like to express our deep gratitude for the inclusion of an amendment supporting the expansion of our ScoutReach program.

The Simon Kenton Council of Scouting America delivers the Scouting program, which is rooted in fun, friendships, and creating unforgettable experiences that become the core memories kids carry with them for life. Scouting helps youth develop life skills and grow into the best version of themselves by shaping confident, compassionate, and capable future leaders.

Currently, the Simon Kenton Council services more than 11,000 youth across 18 counties in Central and Southern Ohio. We have more than 4,500 adult volunteers who deliver over 500,000 volunteer hours to their community. Eagle Scouts alone have achieved more than 30,000 service hours that represent \$934,500 in direct service to Ohio communities.

ScoutReach is a vital initiative that ensures all youth—regardless of background or financial circumstance—have access to the life-changing experiences and leadership development opportunities offered through Scouting. In 2024, the ScoutReach program grew by over 100%, a reflection of both the need of programs like Scouting in local communities and the powerful outcomes the program produces.

The amendment included in House Bill 96 appropriates funding that will directly support the expansion of ScoutReach across under-resourced and hard-to-reach communities in central and southern Ohio. This funding will allow the Simon Kenton Council to:

- Triple Scouting membership in communities facing economic challenges,
- Hire two additional program coordinators to manage and deliver high-quality programming,
- Employ a dedicated risk manager to enhance youth safety protocols,

- Integrate social work support to meet the broader needs of families served by the Simon Kenton Council,
- Provide financial assistance for families who would otherwise be unable to participate, and
- Invest in outreach and marketing efforts to expand the program's impact.

This investment in Ohio's youth not only promotes access to Scouting but also fosters character development, leadership, and academic success—qualities that will benefit Ohio and its communities for generations to come.

The Simon Kenton Council commends leaders in the Ohio House of Representatives for recognizing the value of youth development and thank them for their leadership in helping Simon Kenton Council reach more Ohio youth. I would be happy to discuss the ScoutReach program in more detail at any time. I can be reached via email at travis.gulling@scouting.org.

The Simon Kenton Council looks forward to working together to ensure every young person has the opportunity to become a well-prepared citizen of Ohio.