

House Finance Committee
Proponent Testimony on HB 96
Submitted by: Tekisha Boone, Foster Care Parent, Junior League Columbus
April 8, 2025

Thank you, Chair Stewart, Vice Chair Dovilla, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the Committee, for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 96. I respectfully request that you include funding for House Bill 25's Foster-to-College Scholarship Program in House Bill 96.

My name is Tekisha Boone and my family became a licensed Foster Care family in 2022. My husband Andrew & I, are the proud parents of two strong, independent, intelligent, service minded girls, Anisha Renee who is 21 and Janae Christine who is 14. While handmaking masks during the pandemic in 2020, Janae requested a younger sibling. She had a desire to be a big sister and a mentor to young girls, just like her older sister, Anisha. She also knew that Anisha would soon be leaving our home to attend college in the fall and she was anticipating being an only child. Andrew and I had considered being foster parents and decided to do it, based on our faith and desire to give back. After seeing so many children safer at school than they were at home during the pandemic, we considered Janae's desire and found our Foster Care agency, Adriel. Adriel's mission is to *Provide quality care for children, young adults, and families in the spirit of Christian love.*

As expected, Anisha went to college in the fall and despite achieving a 3.7 GPA and receiving additional scholarships and financial support, Andrew and I spent \$80K from our savings on her 1st 2 years of college. We are so grateful to be able to support our children, however I cannot imagine a child emancipating from the foster system and trying to take on this journey alone. The process of going to college can be very overwhelming and requires extra support.

Fast forward to the day our lives were forever impacted by Miss Priya Kami.

A lot of people are afraid of helping children in Foster-care because of trauma these young people have faced at no fault of their own. When we met Priya, she blessed us way more than we would have ever imagined. Our biological children showed such compassion and care for her. They prepared for her and spent time with her doing nails and roller skating.... teaching her about our life and encouraging her to love herself. Priya shared her creative ideas and dreams with us and my girls & I introduced her new things, like scholarship pageants.

Priya's personal story of perseverance changed our hearts forever. Our home was not the same, since meeting her – in fact, we are better, we are stronger, more loving and we are so grateful to know her and her fulltime foster parents, Maggie and Austin Baxter. I encourage more people to consider obtaining their foster care license – start off as a respite only provider and give a break to some of the fulltime foster homes in Ohio. They need us and we need them – because it truly does take a village.

_____ (Priya's speech)

Education is vital to success and for children like Priya who are dreaming big! By including House Bill 25's Foster-to-College Scholarship Program in House Bill 96, we can give our Ohio Foster youth hope and help them change their circumstances.

Thank you for your consideration of this program. We urge you to include this appropriation in House Bill 96.