

House Workforce & Higher Education Committee
Proponent Testimony on HB 25
Betsie Norris, Adoption Network Cleveland
April 29, 2025

Thank you, Chair Young, Vice Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Piccolantonio, and members of the House Higher Education Committee for the opportunity to testify. I am here to express my strong support for House Bill 25, the Foster-to-College Scholarship Act.

My name is Betsie Norris. I am the Executive Director of Adoption Network Cleveland, and I offer this testimony to emphasize how critical it is to provide a pathway for former foster youth in Ohio to attend post-secondary education through this vital program.

Adoption Network Cleveland: “The Ohio Family Connection” is a forward-thinking nonprofit dedicated to meeting essential needs for information, advocacy, education, and support within the adoption community. Serving adoptees, birth parents, adoptive, kinship, and foster families—as well as youth currently or formerly in foster care, siblings, and related professionals—we provide programs and resources that make a difference. Our innovative services are designed to empower and support these individuals, filling gaps that might otherwise go unmet.

House Bill 25 would make college and job-training scholarships available to youth currently in or aging out of foster care, as well as to those who were in foster care at any point after their 13th birthday.

We support House Bill 25 wholeheartedly. First and foremost, it’s the right thing to do for young people who have had Ohio’s child welfare system act as their custodian—stepping in to fill the role of a parent. By taking on this responsibility, the state has a duty to provide not only for their well-being but also to set the foundation for their success. Ensuring access to education and workforce readiness is a critical part of that commitment, giving these youth the tools they need for a stable and successful adult life.

We commend the program’s approach, which removes barriers for youth who find permanency through adoption during their teen years. No young person should have to choose between a permanent family and access to higher education. Families who adopt teens typically haven’t had the same time to save for college that other families might. House Bill 25 is designed to allow these youth to have both the support of a permanent family and the financial resources for post-secondary education or vocational training. This provision reflects a compassionate and pragmatic solution.

Furthermore, it is in Ohio’s best interest to invest in these young people. Supporting them in pursuing higher education or job training not only empowers them to thrive but also helps them become productive, contributing members of society—an investment that promises to yield long-term savings in public costs.

In closing, we respectfully request that you vote “yes” on House Bill 25, the Foster-to-College Scholarship Act. Thank you for your consideration of this important program and for your time.