

House Higher Education Committee
Proponent Testimony on HB 25
Rita Soronen, The Dave Thomas Foundation
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.

More than 3,500 children are waiting to be adopted from foster care in Ohio right now, and nearly 1,000 young people will age out this year. The Dave Thomas Foundation is committed to dramatically increasing the number of adoptions so that children will have safe, permanent homes before they age out. Ohio has an opportunity to enact the Foster to College Scholarship Program through House Bill 25, which will make adoption more accessible to families. By covering the cost of attending any post secondary education or workforce training for students who were in foster care as teenagers, this program relieves the financial burden placed on adoptive families and empowers them to support all their children, including those who were adopted.

The cost of college has increased significantly, forcing parents to save for years. Families considering adopting a teenager face a dilemma: “How can we support each of our children to pursue their dreams, even if we haven’t been saving for it?” This program will give parents the ability to help all their children reach their highest aspirations, regardless of their savings. The fact is, many parents cannot afford to save at all and must take on debt to support their children. For families considering adopting a teenager, relieving the financial burden of education loans in the future will make adoption more feasible today.

House Bill 25’s Foster to College Scholarship Program presents an opportunity to invest in children who have endured abuse and neglect and experienced trauma, grief, and loss. With the support of caring adults, these young people can overcome adverse childhood experiences and become thriving adults who give back to their communities. Because the program would offer financial support for all types of workforce training—beyond just a college degree—it will help young people achieve a vision for their future, whatever their aspirations may be. Having hope in their future also helps them stay on a positive and constructive path throughout their teenage years.

As we race against the clock to ensure that all children have a permanent home, I urge our legislators to view this proposal with urgency. Ohio is a thriving state, and this is an investment that will pay dividends for generations.

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.