



Ohio Children's Alliance

Leading change for child and family service providers

Ohio House Workforce and Higher Education Committee

May 6, 2025

Ohio Children's Alliance Proponent Testimony on HB 25

Chair Young, Vice Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Brown Piccolantonio, and members of the House Workforce and Higher Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill (HB) 25.

My name is Kate Rossman and I am the Policy Manager for the Ohio Children's Alliance, a statewide nonprofit organization that both represents private foster care agencies and works with state partners to directly provide services to former foster youth. For example, our organization partners with the Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE) to operate Ohio Reach, a state program that supports college students with a connection to foster, kinship, or out-of-home care with the resources, support, and mentorship they need to navigate postsecondary education and independent life as a young adult.

House Bill 25 would provide critical support for foster care alumni. According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation, a national expert on child welfare policy, as of 2021, Ohio is [lagging behind the rest of the nation in post-secondary enrollment](#) for former foster youth. This legislation would align Ohio with the vast majority of states that offer tuition benefits to young people previously involved in the foster care system. This includes every state bordering Ohio. Outcome reporting on a very similar program in Texas showed this reduced financial barriers and increased college graduation rates for former foster youth. House Bill 25 ensures that Ohio higher education remains competitive and in reach for foster youth.

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The success of these young adults will have a direct and significant benefit to the state. Foster care alumni who complete post-secondary education achieve better employment outcomes and can have a more stable transition away from the child welfare system. This stability is also more cost-effective for the state and our communities. According to another study by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, an unstable transition costs communities about [\\$300,000 per individual leaving foster care](#). By investing in higher education for Ohio's former foster youth, the General Assembly will position our state and young people for success.

While we are incredibly supportive of this bill, we would like to note one concern. One of the most important services this program offers is four foster care student navigators to help foster youth apply for post-secondary admission and funding. This bill mandates that ODHE contract with the out-of-state federal Chafee ETV (Education Training Voucher) program grantee. We believe there is value in allowing an organization with local insights about Ohio's foster youth and/or higher education system to administer this important program. We would ask that the committee consider replacing this earmarked vendor with a competitive selection process that would allow ODHE to choose a vendor that can demonstrate the best ability to operate this program. If the committee would like, we can share the amendment language we prepared for the last General Assembly. We have presented this language to the bill's sponsors from the last General Assembly and received a positive reception. We would ask that the committee once again support this change.

House Bill 25 represents a significant and necessary investment in the future of Ohio's foster youth. Thank you once again for your dedication to Ohio's children and for your consideration of this legislation. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Kate Rossman
Policy Manager
Ohio Children's Alliance

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