

**House Workforce & Higher Education Committee**  
**Proponent Testimony on HB 25**  
**Janae Boone**  
**May 6, 2025**

Thank you, Chair Young, Vice Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Piccolantonio, and members of the House Higher Education Committee for the opportunity to testify.

My name is Janae Christine Boone. I'm 14 years old freshman and I'm here as the proud big sister in a foster family. I am here to express my strong support for House Bill 25, the Foster-to-College Scholarship Act.

### **My Family and Priya**

I always wanted to be a big sister. I have an amazing older sister, Anisha, who inspires me, and I dreamed of having a younger sibling to care for just like she cared for me. Last year, after a lot of prayer, my parents decided to become foster parents through Adriel, a Christian foster care agency. We felt called to give back and open our home to children in need.

That's how we met Priya. Priya was nine when she joined our family (she's ten now), and from the moment she arrived we bonded over painting our nails, roller skating, and preparing for pageants.

Whenever Priya is around, our house is now filled with laughter, and Priya's smile brightens every room. She came to us quiet and nervous, but she has blossomed into a bold, giggly, loving part of our family. She has changed our home for the better, and I can't imagine life without her.

### **The Challenges Foster Youth Face**

As a big sister, I can't help worrying about Priya's future. Even though she's only in fourth grade, I think about her dreams and what it will take for her to achieve them. One dream she talks about is becoming a nurse. She actually spoke about it at the House Finance Committee.

But I've learned that kids who grow up in foster care face **tough odds** in education. Only about **3% of former foster youth graduate from a four-year college**. That isn't because they lack talent or drive — it's because when they age out of foster care at 18, they're often left to fend for themselves.

At 18, many foster youth have no family to help with college or a home to return to. **All the costs of college** — tuition, housing, food, textbooks — fall entirely on them. Some end up homeless during school breaks or go hungry. Others try to juggle full-time jobs with full-time classes, which is often too much. It breaks my heart that Priya, or any foster kid, could have to give up on college because they can't afford it and does not have parents to support them.

In our state, programs like **Ohio Reach** help foster kids a lot. Ohio Reach connects students from foster care with mentors on campus, so they have someone to guide them. But even the best mentor can't pay tuition or cover rent.

### **Why House Bill 96 Matters**

House Bill 25 would create a scholarship to cover the costs of college for any student who was in foster care after age 13. In simple terms, **if kids like Priya get into college, money won't stop her from going**. She wouldn't have to fear crushing debt or having to choose between buying groceries and buying textbooks.

House Bill 25 also creates four navigator position, to help students navigate from high school to college and connect them with resources like this scholarship (along with several others that my fellow witnesses will discuss) and Ohio Reach, so no one slips through the cracks.

## **My Requests to the Committee**

I'm here on behalf of someone I love, and I have two requests:

1. **Please pass House Bill 25 and make the Foster-to-College Scholarship Program a reality.** By supporting this bill, you will open doors for many foster youth. You will send a clear message that their dreams matter to Ohio.
2. **Please ensure foster youth have the support they need to succeed.** That means not just financial help like this scholarship, but also mentorship and guidance. The navigators in this bill are one part of that, but I think that we should also be telling people how great it is to become a foster family.

I don't see a "foster kid" when I look at Priya – I see my little sister, a girl who can do anything she sets her mind to. I really believe in her. I also believe Ohio can make sure she has every chance to succeed.

If Priya goes to college and graduates one day, it won't be because she got lucky. It will be because *we chose to change the system to give her a real chance.*

Let's make Ohio a place where every foster youth knows their community believes in them. **Thank you for your time.**

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.