

House Workforce & Higher Education Committee
Chaka Wilson
May 6, 2025

Chairman Young, Vice Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Brown Piccolantonio, and members of the House Workforce and Higher Education Committee, my name is Chaka Wilson, and I am the Program Manager of the RiSE Initiative at The Ohio State University which includes the Fostering Achievement Network. I appreciate the opportunity to provide written proponent testimony in support of House Bill 25, which would establish the Foster-to-College Scholarship program.

As mentioned in prior submitted testimony from The Ohio State University. To refamiliarize you with a portion of Tom Walsh's testimony: In 2020, a student at Ohio State established the Fostering Achievement Network (FAN) to help current and former foster care youth navigate higher education. Thanks in part to receiving the Ohio REACH Postsecondary designation from the Ohio Department of Higher Education in 2023, Ohio State has been able to expand FAN as a campus-wide initiative. This program offers academic success coaching, peer mentoring, academic support services, and access to scholarships and financial aid consultation services to help our students succeed who experienced foster care, kinship care, or other out-of-home placements.

I serve as the campus liaison for OSU's Fostering Achievement Network through Ohio REACH Postsecondary Network and granted I know that you may think there are many financial and other resources available to help support former foster youth, what I have seen in our program is that even young adults have received a patchwork of financial supports through various different grants and scholarships its still not enough to cover the cost of attendance for the amount of time it takes to earn a degree. I have encountered students who especially need extra support around paying for housing or covering a gap in tuition fees that is left after they have already exhausted funding through other sources . It has been a challenge to find other resources to support these students sometimes we are able to find funding and sometimes students are at risk of dropping out of school because they don't receive the financial support they need.

Thank you for your time.