



Ohio Children's Alliance

Leading change for child and family service providers

Ohio House Workforce and Higher Education Committee

September 30, 2025

Ohio Children's Alliance Testimony on HB 25

Chair Young, Vice Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Abdullahi, and members of the House Workforce and Higher Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding House Bill 25.

For over 50 years, the Ohio Children's Alliance has worked to strengthen outcomes for children and families by supporting community-based child and family service providers, collaborating with state partners, and ensuring that young people—including those formerly in foster care—receive the care and opportunities they need. This includes our partnership with the Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE) to operate **Ohio Reach**, a statewide program that provides college students with a history of connection to foster, kinship, or other out-of-home care the resources, mentorship, and guidance necessary to succeed in post-secondary education and independent life. Currently, **Ohio Reach's network extends to 57 campuses**, including career centers, community colleges, and both public and private colleges and universities across Ohio.

HB 25 would provide critical support for foster care alumni. This population, both in Ohio and nationally, lags behind the general population in post-secondary education. A comprehensive review from earlier this year found that nationally, between **29-64% of former foster youth start some form of post-secondary education but only 8-12% completed their degree** (compared to a 49% completion rate for the general population)¹. A 2023 report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, national experts on child welfare policies, found post-secondary enrollment for young Ohioans with foster care experience sharply fell from **21% for those turning 21 in 2015 to 12% for those turning 21 in 2021**². One proven method for bridging this gap is providing tuition benefits to young people with foster care, as is done in the vast majority of other states in the country. This includes every state bordering Ohio. HB 25 would align Ohio with other states and ensure higher education and its benefits remain in reach for foster care alumni in Ohio.

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

¹ Okpych, N. J., Whitman, K., Lee, J., Neria-Piña, L., Jackson, L. A., & Day, M. (2025). Secondary and Postsecondary Education Outcomes of Students with Experience in Foster Care: Systematic Review of the Literature From 2000–2023. *AERA Open*, 11. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23328584251331454>

² Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2017). *2023 OHIO PROFILE: TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE* [Infographic]. Retrieved September 29, 2025 from <https://assets.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-fosteringyouth-stateprofile-OH.pdf>

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communities. According to another study by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, **an unstable transition costs communities about \$300,000 per individual leaving foster care**³. By investing in higher education for Ohio's former foster youth, the General Assembly will position our state and young people for success.

Real achievement gaps exist within our state for former foster youth, and we believe HB 25 is a necessary tool to close this gap. We look forward to ensuring that Ohioans with foster care experience can **maximize all existing and potential resources** to ensure a smooth transition to independence and have opportunities to thrive. If committee members have any questions, we would welcome them to reach out.

Sincerely,

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³ Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative. (2023, May 26). *ISSUE BRIEF: COST AVOIDANCE The Business Case for Investing In Youth Aging Out of Foster Care*. Annie E. Casey Foundation. <https://www.aecf.org/resources/cost-avoidance-the-business-case-for-investing-in-youth-aging-out-of-foster>

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