

Testimony of Kim Eckhart
Maple Grove Church
House Workforce and Higher Education Committee
September 30, 2025

Chair Young, Vice Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Addullahi, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today as an interested party regarding House amended substitute Bill 25 and the amendments to add the Foster-to-College Scholarship Program.

First, I want to commend the committee for thoughtfully considering and including amendments offered by interested parties. These changes strengthen the bill and ensure that the Foster-to-College Scholarship program can stand the test of time.

In particular, I want to recognize the necessity of adopting an upper age limit for eligibility. While I firmly believe that every individual—regardless of age—should be given the opportunity to achieve financial stability through education, I also acknowledge the reality of limited appropriations. By prioritizing younger students, the committee has taken a prudent step to ensure that scarce resources are directed to those who are just starting out on their journey and need the most support to achieve success.

As the daughter of a former foster youth, I have seen firsthand how critical access to education is in shaping life outcomes. It was my mother's scholarship offered by the state of Connecticut in 1968 that allowed her to attend Marietta College. That college offered me a scholarship as well, as a daughter of an alumni. I have made it my mission over the past three years to make this opportunity available to students in Ohio too. This program will provide vital tuition, room, and board support, helping foster alumni pursue higher education without the constant fear of homelessness, hunger, or overwhelming financial stress. With this investment, we can improve graduation rates, economic security, and overall well-being for foster youth in our state.

Thank you for your thoughtful work on this legislation, and for your commitment to expanding opportunities for some of Ohio's most vulnerable young people.

Respectfully submitted,
Kim Eckhart
Member, Maple Grove Church