



INTER-UNIVERSITY COUNCIL OF OHIO
10 West Broad Street, Suite 450
Columbus, Ohio 43215-7415
Ofc (614) 464-1266
www.iuc-ohio.org

Proponent Testimony

House Bill 25

Laura Lanese, President and CEO
Inter-University Council of Ohio

Chair Young, Vice-Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Abdullahi, and members of the House Workforce and Higher Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written proponent testimony on House Bill 25, on behalf of the Inter-University Council of Ohio (IUC) and Ohio's fourteen public universities.

Substitute House Bill 25 is a creative strategy for connecting foster youth in Ohio to life-changing resources and opportunities. You have already received testimony from two of our member schools, sharing how programs like the Ohio State University's Fostering Achievement Network and Bowling Green State University's Independent Falcon Network help to connect at-risk students with on-campus resources, staff mentors, and more. I would also point to other programs at our public universities that have been discussed during previous versions of this legislation, including Kent State's Fostering Pathways for Bright Futures and Cleveland State's Sullivan-Deckard Scholarship Opportunity program as just a few of the first class examples of how our institutions truly promote the best interest of foster youth students.

By better connecting Ohio's foster youth to the resources that currently are available and designating responsible adults to help them navigate important decisions, House Bill 25 will help to improve student outcomes by supporting them at a formative moment in their lives. We know that the opportunity for an affordable higher education is a foundational and tremendously effective way to assist these young people, and we value the work of this committee in connecting them to an adult they know and trust—who can have these pivotal conversations at a personal level. Helping a student start and complete a degree at one of our public four-year universities provides a lifetime earnings boost of an estimated \$1.2 million—so it is not only the right thing to do but also provides a tremendous return on investment for the taxpayer.

By providing targeted assistance and encouragement at a critical moment in a young person's life, this legislation will help to change lives for the better. I would like to thank Representative Ray and Representative Jarrells (and former Representative Bill Seitz) for their work in bringing this legislation forward in advocating for Ohio's foster youth, as well as Chairman Young and this committee for your work in supporting foster youth and our public higher education in our state.