

Senate Education Committee Senate Bill 156

Testimony

Chair Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 156.

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Connie Huber, and I am a professor and program coordinator of Public Health at the University of Cincinnati. I strongly support Bill 156 and its companion bill in the Ohio House.

The greatest thing one generation can leave another is hope. I work every day with GenZers and Millennials, who are often too often, hopeless (data). Consequently, many work to escape reality by playing video games and scrolling TikTok hours upon end, others assume different identities to escape painful realities of family structures that leave them feeling they don't belong anywhere, and all too many escape by suicide. Dropping birth rates and rising suicide rates indicate a need for radical change in Ohio. A clear, concise road map, like the Success Sequence, is what Ohio youth need.

What do Vogue and research institutes like Brookings and the Institute for Family Studies have in common? They have all made statements that support the Success Sequence.

Vogue says, “**Teen mothers** are less likely to complete their education and, therefore, **more likely to live in poverty** and rely on government assistance”. Brookings Institute says, “Teens who delay becoming parents until they have completed their education and are 21 years old are less likely to live in poverty”. The Institute for Family Studies says, “Teens who complete

education before starting a family are less likely to live in poverty and rely on government assistance.”

The research, which is called the Success Sequence, provides a map for young people to follow that increases the chances of a safe, stable, and thriving family and economic success.

Myth 1: Poverty as a matter of personal failure rather than systemic design

Critics of the success sequence often highlight that it overlooks the obstacles that individual efforts cannot always overcome. It is undeniable that structural disadvantages make following the three steps of the sequence more challenging. Ian Rowe, an African American educator, author, and researcher at the American Enterprise Institute, says the debilitating narrative, combined with their challenging conditions, communicates to young people that they were victims of forces beyond their control, and that their destinies were not up to them. Rowe resolved to promote a rewrite of the victimhood narrative and to champion a change in institutions to show children they can determine their own paths or sequences. Young adults who adhere to the sequence, despite these disadvantages, are considerably more likely to achieve a better quality of life. In fact, young adults from disadvantaged circumstances who follow the sequence are markedly more likely to overcome challenges. Richard Reeves of the Brookings Institute stated, the vast majority of black and Hispanic young adults are in the middle class or higher today after completing all three success sequence steps.

Myth 2: Success Sequence promoters themselves did not follow the Success Sequence

In 2014, five years after the premiere of both *16 and Pregnant* and its spin-off *Teen Mom*, the National Bureau of Economic Statistics looked into why the United States had seen a nearly 11% drop in teen pregnancies since 2008. Two key factors? The economy and...*Teen Mom*. Children

and teens can learn from the choices others make. Healthy adults often want to share wisdom from the lessons they have learned. This is why we place highway signs up indicating dangerous curves ahead following accidents, to warn others.

Myth 3: Current statuses can and do change all the time.

‘Dropping out, idleness, and single parenthood make you poor’ is on par with ‘burning money makes you poor.’ Bryan Caplan.

Early motherhood entraps teen moms—and their children—in a bleak socioeconomic cycle that’s almost impossible to break. It’s little wonder, then, that as teen births have plunged, rates of child poverty have too”. (Elise Taylor’s article in April 2025, Vouge)

This is important for child welfare, young children in such households are nearly 50 times as likely to die from inflicted injuries, usually being shaken or struck, compared to children living with two biological parents, according to a study by researchers from the University of Missouri-Columbia and the University of Chicago.

Safe, stable, and thriving families are the bedrock of society and the driving force of the American Dream. So, I ask you to consider my testimony and vote YES on this important society-changing bill.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

I will now take any questions you may have.