

Presented to the Ohio Senate-Support for SB 156

May 6, 2025

Chair Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of Senate Bill 156. My name is Maggie Westrick and I've had the privilege of working with Ohio youth, ages 10 to 19, for over 15 years—teaching life skills, goal-setting, and the building blocks of long-term success. One of the most impactful frameworks I've used in that time is the “Success Sequence,” which SB 156 seeks to integrate into Ohio classrooms.

The Success Sequence—graduate from high school, secure full-time employment, and marry before having children—is not a rigid life prescription. It's a research-informed approach that empowers young people to see how their decisions today can shape their future. It provides clarity, direction, and—perhaps most importantly—hope.

Each time I teach the Success Sequence, I'm struck by how many young people respond as if they're hearing this information for the very first time. Watching them process it—often with wide eyes and thoughtful silence—is both inspiring and heartbreaking. It's inspiring because they begin asking questions and engaging in meaningful dialogue about their futures. It's heartbreaking because no one has ever shared this with them before—let alone modeled it.

We also recognize that some of the youth we work with are already parents. We make it clear that while their path may now be more challenging, it's absolutely still possible to get back on track. The Success Sequence isn't about perfection—it's about progress. Yes, it may require more effort, but by choosing to move forward with intention, they can still change their own trajectory—and that of their child.

When I teach the Success Sequence, students engage. They ask smart, thoughtful questions. They think critically about their futures. I remember a 16-year-old incarcerated student telling me, “No one's ever explained life like this before. I didn't think it was possible; it was only stories.” That student later graduated high school, the first in his family and got a fulltime job working at FedEx. He is now working works full-time, supporting himself and helping his younger siblings. This is just one example. Each time I share the success sequence I am amazed at how many youth find it to be new information,

As someone who works closely with youth and also as a parent, I can say this: we all want the same things for the next generation. We want our kids to finish high school. We want them to find meaningful, steady work. And we want them to start families when they're emotionally and financially ready—ideally within the stability of marriage. These aren't controversial values—they're shared aspirations across all backgrounds and communities. So the real question is: if this

is what we want for our own children, why wouldn't we want to teach **all** youth about the choices and steps that can help get them there?

SB 156 isn't about judgment or ideology. It's about ensuring that every student in Ohio, regardless of zip code, has access to information that can help them build a better future. It equips professionals like me to have honest, age-appropriate conversations about life planning—conversations many young people never hear otherwise.

Supporting this bill means giving every young person a fair shot at success—not by force, but through informed choice. As a professional I strongly support SB 156 to help us share this vital message with Ohio's youth.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to the future of our state.

Maggie Westrick

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