

Presented to the Ohio Senate-Support for SB 156

May 5, 2025

Maggie Westrick

The RIDGE Project, INC.

Maggie.westrick@theridgeproject.com

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

Testimony in Support of Ohio Senate Bill 156 – Success Sequence Education

Presented by [Timothy Snoke], U.S. Naval Academy Graduate, Class of 1987

Chairman and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to offer my full support for Ohio Senate Bill 156, which seeks to introduce Success Sequence education into our state's schools and communities.

I am a 1987 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, originally appointed by then-State Representative Michael Oxley. During my time at the Academy and throughout my naval service, I was struck by the sheer number of men and women who came from families with a tradition of generational service. It was not uncommon to meet officers whose families had served in the Navy for three or even four generations. These weren't just names on a roster — they were men and women tied to the proud legacies of leaders like President Jimmy Carter, Senator John McCain, and Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry, who is honored in the rotunda of our great Statehouse.

As a young man, I often asked myself why certain families seemed to consistently produce successful individuals across generations. With time, experience, and reflection, I came to understand: it was because these families had — knowingly or not — embraced what we now call the Success Sequence. They practiced and passed on a foundational series of life decisions and values: finish high school, get a full-time job, and marry before having children. These habits formed a kind of "basic training" for life, passed from one generation to the next.

For the past 13 years, I have worked both as a volunteer and contractor in many of Ohio's prisons. Within weeks of entering this work, I encountered something just as striking as the generational pride I'd seen in the Navy — but this time, it was far more tragic. I began to meet men serving time alongside their sons. In some cases, grandfathers, fathers, and sons were all incarcerated at the same facility. While each conviction may have been just and appropriate, their shared fate pointed to a deeper systemic failure — one that went beyond individual crimes and revealed the absence of a shared, sustaining framework for life.

Through The RIDGE Project, my work has focused on teaching Success Sequence-based curricula and communication skills to incarcerated adults. These programs offer a vision of hope, not only for the individual, but for their families and communities. I've seen firsthand the powerful impact of these principles on men and women who, in many cases, had never been exposed to this kind of structured guidance.

One moment I will never forget occurred during a session at Richland Correctional Institution. A 65-year-old man began sobbing in the middle of class. Between gasps, he shared that he had never in his life heard of the Success Sequence — and that if he had, everything could have been different. But his greatest heartbreak wasn't his own missed opportunity; it was that two generations of his family had followed him into incarceration. Through tears, he begged the other men in the room to take seriously what they were learning, saying, *"If someone had told me this when I was young, I would have done everything differently."*

Thankfully, for many incarcerated men and women, this education does come in time — not only to change their personal path, but to influence the generations that will follow them. One man I've worked with stands out in particular. After embracing the Success Sequence and completing our program, he committed himself to rebuilding his family's future. He created a family mission statement and taught it to his children. He had them memorize it as a daily guide for decision-making. He even designed a family crest — a tangible symbol of his family's identity, values, and commitment to legacy.

His journey took him from incarceration to a job in trucking. From there, he pursued certification as a John Maxwell speaker and trainer, and today he helps others find the path to purpose and stability. His story — like so many others — is proof that the Success Sequence is not an abstract theory. It is a working model of how to build a better future.

Some may argue that such a framework oversimplifies the complexities of life. But simplicity is not the same as being reductionist. The truth is, the Success Sequence is backed by rigorous research and validated across economic and racial lines. It is not a prescription for perfection, but a path — a pattern that works regardless of where one begins.

This is not about ideology; it's about evidence. It's not about assigning blame; it's about equipping the next generation. Senate Bill 156 offers us a chance to do just that. By teaching the principles of the Success Sequence, we can provide Ohio's youth with a roadmap that too many are currently denied — a roadmap that can change the trajectory of individuals, families, and communities.

For these reasons and many more, I strongly urge you to support Senate Bill 156. Our future depends on the decisions we empower young people to make today. Let us give them the tools they need — not just to succeed, but to build lasting legacies.

Thank you.