



Statement before the Ohio Senate Education Committee
Testimony on S.B. No. 156

Improving Economic Mobility by Teaching the Success Sequence

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To Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Ingram and the esteemed members of the Senate Education Committee, my name is Ian Rowe.

I join you today as a Senior Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, where my research focuses on the factors that drive upward mobility, with a particular emphasis on education, work, family formation and how best to ensure the rising generation learns the pathways most likely to lead to economic prosperity.

I also am an educator, someone who puts theory and research into action. For the last fifteen years, I have led public charter schools at the elementary, middle and high school levels in low-income communities in the Bronx, New York. I have had the privilege of educating thousands of children, from families similar to Ohio parents who want schools to educate their children to develop the skills and habits to become agents of their own uplift.

That is why I am honored to testify in support of SB156 which requires the Ohio department of education and workforce to develop standards and a model curriculum about the success sequence for grades six to twelve. The success sequence is data that shows if a young person completes at least a high school degree; then gets a full-time job of any kind so they learn the dignity and discipline of work, and waits to have children until marriage, 97% of millennials who follow this sequence in that order avoid poverty. The vast majority enter the middle class or beyond.

Because of the strong evidence in its favor, the success sequence has bi-partisan support, as it has been championed by progressive organizations like the Brookings Institution ([Creating Opportunity for Forgotten Americans](#)) and conservative organizations like the Heritage Foundation ([Empowering Every Child: Unveiling the Success Sequence Model For Success in Both School and Life](#)).

Why is this information important for kids to learn? Throughout my career, I have worked with students from every imaginable background, growing up in challenging situations - domestic violence, poverty, father absence - who succumb to those conditions and unfortunately recreate them as they enter young adulthood, perpetuating the cycle of degradation. Sadly, we have all seen this.

But I have also seen kids under those same exact conditions develop a future orientation for their lives, which leads them to make different sets of decisions that put them on a different trajectory to break the cycle of disadvantage. The question is what makes the difference?"

That has become the animating question of my life.

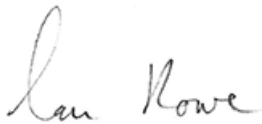
My observation is that students that have been able to break the cycle of disadvantage typically made key choices during what we call the life-deciding decade between the ages of 14 and 24. The quality of decisions made during that period of time - particularly choices around education, work, relationships and when to start a family - have huge influence over the quality of the rest of your life.

This is why at the high school I founded, Vertex Partnership Academies, we have a class called Pathways to Power in which we teach the success sequence to provide young people with a roadmap to economic stability and avoid poverty. We teach that among adults who are 32-38, only 3 percent of those who followed these steps - education, work, marriage, then children - are in poverty today. Of those who missed these steps, 52 percent are in poverty.

Parents support teaching this content. Indeed, a study done at the [American Enterprise Institute](#) found that a significant majority of parents (76%), including those who did not strictly adhere to the "success sequence" themselves, support teaching it to their children.

We have a moral responsibility to let young people, especially those struggling, know that their life can be their own. But we have to let them know how. Passage of SB156 can be an important step towards that goal.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ian Rowe".

Resources on the Success Sequence

- [A Proven Path to the American Dream](#)
- [Success Sequence - A Synthesis of the Literature](#)
- [The Millennial Success Sequence](#)