

Setting Ohio Students Up for Financial and Familial Success

Statement before the Ohio Senate Committee
Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 156

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

The students of Ohio want to know how to succeed in life. The Success Sequence, indebted to research from the American Enterprise Institute, the Brookings Institution, and the Institute for Family Studies (IFS), provides a simple framework for high schoolers with very clear steps for success in life. Research shows that young people who complete at least high school, work full-time, and get married before having kids have a [97% chance](#) of avoiding poverty as they move into adulthood. They are also significantly less likely to experience [family breakdown](#) and [emotional distress](#) as adults. But it is not just poverty that students avoid.

Ohio's high school students come from a diverse range of backgrounds and family situations. The success sequence works and is accessible for anyone, regardless of background. In the same manner, no one should be disqualified from being able to access material and follow the sequence because of their family background, and we advocate for equality of access to the Success Sequence.

For some of Ohio's students, the relationship role models that are available to them are not sufficiently diverse—that is, they don't have access to a sufficient number of strong and stable married families in their communities. In some neighborhoods across the Buckeye State, unstable families predominate. America has the highest single-parent family rate in the world, and [Ohio ranks 29th in the United States](#) on the Family Structure Index, and so is below the American average.

This matters because there is an undeniable link between the American Dream and marriage. [States with higher levels of marriage and married-parent families](#) have greater economic prosperity, less child poverty, and higher

median family incomes. Children who grow up in married-parent families are markedly more likely to excel educationally than their peers in non-intact families, providing them with a better shot at economic prosperity in adulthood. In Ohio, for instance, controlling for race, parental education, age, and child sex, children [raised in single-mother homes](#) are four times more likely to be poor in Ohio than children in married families. Data point after data point tell the same story: Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness are best [secured](#) by strong and stable families.

[Senate Bill 156](#) by Senator Cutrona would ensure that all children in Ohio public schools receive equal access to this information on how to build a successful life.

Making this information available to all of Ohio's children—this simple formula—at several key points during their coming-of-age years will lead to better lives for them and the next generation. State lawmakers have an opportunity to set young Ohioans up for success by providing clear teaching for our children on how education, work, and marriage are tied to greater financial security, emotional well-being, and family stability as they move through adolescence into adulthood.

The success sequence provides clear information on the value of education, work, and marriage. It is especially valuable information for students who have not been much exposed to strong and stable marriages growing up. With clear instruction in the sequence, they are empowered to make their own life choices and to forge a path to economic and familial success.