



House Bill 96: FY 2026-2027 Biennial Operating Budget
Senate Finance Committee
Senator Jerry Cirino, Chair
Thursday, May 29, 2025

Margo Hudson, Student Ambassador, Seeds of Literacy

Members of the Committee, I'm excited to share how Seeds of Literacy changed my life.

I grew up on the South Side of Chicago, and to be honest, my childhood wasn't easy. There was abuse at home, and I left when I was 16. I didn't finish 9th grade or high school—I just went straight to work. Over the years, I had a lot of jobs, but none of them paid much. I worked in nursing homes, fast food, as a home health aide, and did housecleaning.

By the time I was in my 40s, I was working at the airport cleaning airplanes. It was hard, fast-paced work, and I was outside in all kinds of weather. I wanted something different for myself, but I didn't think I had anything to offer. Without my GED and with no self-confidence, I felt like I didn't belong with the people who flew on those planes.

I was struggling with depression and kept thinking, "I've got to do something with my life." Buddha said that when the student is ready, the teacher will appear. So, I decided to try for my GED, which was something I had started before but never finished. I chose Seeds of Literacy because of their one-on-one tutoring, and this time, I was determined to make it work.

As Obi Wan said in Star Wars, I had taken my first step into a larger world.

I spent the next 11 years working on my GED at Seeds. I studied every chance I got—on lunch breaks, during my 15-minute breaks, on the bus, and even while waiting at the doctor's office. I refused to give up.

During this time, my confidence grew as I advanced my skills. I became more comfortable talking to people and interacting with the world around me. I also got a better job at the airport, working in the President's Club.

It took me six tries to pass the GED, but I had persistence, resilience and determination. I'll never, ever forget the call from Seeds telling me that I finally did it. That moment was life-changing. I thought passing the GED would just be something to check off my list, but it turned out to be so much more.

I started reading more, and I began to believe I had something to offer. I even started volunteering at Seeds. At first, I thought I'd help with filing or small tasks, but they asked me to tutor! I've been tutoring students twice a week for the past seven years, and my specialty is Fractions!

I also picked up new hobbies. I started learning to play the keyboard, make candy, knit scarves, and even got into duct tape crafts! I just kept learning new things. At work, I began talking with customers at the Club, sharing stories about books, families, and even my own journey. It turns out I had more in common with people in business and government than I ever imagined.

In 2016, I was named National Learner of the Year, which took me to Dallas for a conference. Governor Kasich presented me with the Courage Award, and I even got to lead the Pledge of Allegiance at the Republican National Convention. Cleveland Magazine named me one of Cleveland's Most Interesting People in 2017, and the Cleveland Foundation recognized me as one of Cleveland's Place Makers in 2018. I even got to speak at a Creative Mornings event in Cleveland. In 2022, I was honored with a ServeOhio Award.

But what I'm most proud of is becoming a literacy ambassador. Over the past three years, I've shared my story with people in homeless shelters, recovery programs, health fairs, libraries, and even with Senators and Congresspeople. My face was even on the side of a bus! I'm passionate about showing how literacy can change lives because it completely changed mine.

I never thought I'd be doing any of this before I got my GED. Now, I see opportunities where I used to see dead ends. I've learned that when we let fear or shyness hold us back, we miss out on so much.

Seeds of Literacy made all of this possible. Their one-on-one tutoring opened the door to a whole new life for me. I'm always learning, always growing, and now I know I have something to offer. I'm excited about what's next.

Adult literacy changes lives. I hope you'll keep my story in mind as you consider supporting Seeds of Literacy and adult education. Thank you.