

**Public Testimony to the Ohio Senate in Support of EmpowerOhio.org's Budget Amendment**  
**Presented by DeVier Posey – Co-Founder, EmpowerOhio.org**

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**1. The Challenge Ahead: Technology/Data, Change, and Our Youth**

Chair and members of the Senate, thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

Ohio is on the brink of a major transformation. With companies like Intel, Google, and Meta investing here, the future of Ohio's economy holds high stakes with high-demand jobs in AI, robotics, clean tech, and advanced manufacturing.

But here's the reality:

If we don't prepare Ohio's youth for this future, someone else will fill those jobs. People will move here and claim the opportunities our young Ohioans deserve.

Right now, after the final bell rings, we are leaving too many of our kids without support. Leaving screens or disjointed programs to lead our children. It's not the 9am-5pm school hours that scare me most, but the 5pm -9am

This isn't just about education, it's about ownership of their future, our economy, and our communities.

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**2. EmpowerOhio: A Homegrown Solution**

That's why we founded EmpowerOhio, not just to keep kids busy after school but to prepare them for the future.

EmpowerOhio is a afterschool enrichment program company. We created a 36-week Youth Wellness & Enrichment Program, grounded in data, serving youth ages 5 to 18. Through engaging, hands-on experiences, we help kids develop life skills, emotional intelligence, and confidence.

Whether it's , anger management, exercises to raise emotional intelligence, drone soccer, Goal planning, STEM clubs, journaling, or conflict resolution, our programs help kids discover who they are and what they can become.

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### **3. Who We Are: Built by Experience, Rooted in Ohio**

My name is DeVier Posey. I've played football at Ohio State, in the NFL, and in the CFL. I've been a teammate, a champion, a father, and now, a community builder.

Together with Braxton Miller, my co-founder, we've turned our platform into purpose. We started EmpowerOhio because we saw a gap and knew we could help fill it. We've walked in these kids' shoes. Now, we walk beside them.

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### **4. The Impact: What Youth and Communities Are Telling Us**

Our programs are already making a difference in schools like Accel Schools all over the state of Ohio. We've seen:

- Improved attendance and classroom engagement
- Stronger emotional regulation and peer relationships
- Positive feedback from parents and educators alike

And we don't guess. We measure, every session and every site.

Our students consistently report feeling safer, more motivated, and more connected.

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### **5. What Sets Empower Apart: Aligned with Senate Values**

EmpowerOhio aligns directly with this Senate's priorities:

- Youth safety and mental health
- Preventative behavioral health strategies
- Strong school-community partnerships
- Fiscal responsibility

Our model strengthens existing school infrastructure and adapts for rural, urban, and underserved communities.

We don't stop at 3 p.m., because Ohio's challenges don't either.

By serving youth before, during, and after school, we help reduce long-term costs tied to:

- Mental health treatment
- Juvenile justice involvement
- Academic remediation and absenteeism

Empower focuses on prevention instead of reaction, and it is working.

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## **6. Innovation in Action: A Vision for Workforce Readiness**

Our next curriculum expansion, led by Braxton, includes drone and aviation programs that expose kids early to aerospace and flight technology.

But our vision goes further.

Imagine after-school programs across Ohio offering:

- Drone soccer and aviation pathways
- Robotics and AI through applied STEM
- 21st-century trades reimagined with tech
- A process for families to find their child's career path or interest (Surveys, workforce partnerships)

We are not asking you to imagine it, we are building it. We are ready to partner with schools, colleges, behavioral health boards, and industry moguls to bring this future to life.

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## **7. Our Ask: Help Us Scale a Model That Works**

We ask the Senate to support our budget amendment so we can:

- Expand EmpowerOhio into more communities
- Contribute to a statewide framework for after-school excellence
- Build a system that uplifts children and families alike

Our long-term vision is a statewide model where school boards partner with licensed providers and behavioral health organizations to ensure every child has access to high-quality, enriching after-school care.

We propose working with:

- The Ohio Department of Education and Workforce
- Local school districts and behavioral health boards
- A statewide council of educators, parents, and youth leaders
- Innovative Companies who are reimagining and redefining the 21st trades American/Ohio workforce

This structure would include:

- Credentialing for out-of-school-time providers
- Annual reporting by districts and communities
- Integrated behavioral health access
- Sustainable funding and cross-sector governance
- Government/ community / school partnerships that all benefit from a new structure.

Let's make Ohio the first state to do this right and lead the nation.

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## **8. Closing: This Is the Most Important Game I've Ever Played**

I've played in packed stadiums. I've caught game-winning passes. But this moment, standing here and advocating for our youth, is the most important game I've ever played.

Let's not leave Ohio's future to chance. Let's build it, intentionally, inclusively, and boldly.

With your support, we can make sure every Ohio child, not just the lucky few, has a real shot at success.

Let's lead. Let's innovate. Let's go.

Thank you!!!

In closing thank you to our :

Senate / house / floor thank you for your ears from all 88 counties .

My family my sons / Ginny pigs / my wife for the long hours of service

Our littles / first for being open and welcoming and willing to change

Our staff ideas and pure love and grind to serve

Coach Lieutenant governor Tressel lifetime mentor and examensettor