

**Senate Finance Committee
Testimony of David Reiersen
United Way of Central Ohio on Behalf of Siemer Institute Family Stability Programs
Fridan, June 6, 2025**

Hello Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson and members of the Senate Finance Committee. My name is David Reiersen, and I am the Vice President, Public Partnerships with United Way of Central Ohio. I am here today on behalf of the Siemer Institute and our other partner United Ways across the state to request that the Senate restore the TANF Block Grant earmark to the Siemer Institute in order to provide critical funding for the Family Stability Programs. The Ohio Senate has been a critical supporter of the Family Stability Programs since it first received TANF dollars in HB 166 of the 133rd General Assembly. It was the Senate that first established the earmark, and it was the Senate that led the way again in HB 110 of the 134th General Assembly. We believe the Senate's support has been rewarded with tangible results, and we ask that you once again provide access to this crucial funding.

Beginning in 2019, The Family Stability Programs in Dayton, Cleveland, Columbus, Akron, Toledo, and Cincinnati first received TANF dollars with the goal to serve 1,300 families and roughly 3,250 children per year. The support provided by the legislature proved to be transformational – in the first year TANF dollars were used to leverage private dollars, the Family Stability Programs were able to serve 2,000 families and 5,300 children. This success led to continued support from the General Assembly. **All told, state support through TANF dollars over the last six years has allowed the Family Stability Programs to serve 13,086 families and 33,202 children. The matching fund requirement has more than doubled the state's \$7 million investment, resulting in nearly \$16M of public and private funding.** Simply put, the support provided by the General Assembly and the State has allowed us to continue to expand the reach of these critical programs while providing the tools necessary for families to remain stably housed with increased income, and, most importantly, children remain stable in school-

The success we have accomplished is supported by real world data. Through the current year, we have prevented 98% percent of the disruptive school moves that are the precursor to many subsequent educational and behavior problems – educational and behavior problems that require other, more costly interventions. Moreover, 79% of the families we work with have obtained or maintained stable housing due to our program's two-generation approach to counseling and intervention. In other words, we are not just stopping the disruptive school move which results in educational set-back and learning loss, we are providing the tools for entire families to establish a firm foundation for growth and improvement.

In addition to our track record of results, we now have the benefit of partnering with the Department of **Job** and Family Services over three consecutive budget cycles. This partnership proves that our programs and methods are TANF eligible, something that can at times be overlooked during the budget process. We also know that using TANF funds for the preventative and early-intervention efforts of the Families Stability Programs gives the State of Ohio a greater return on their investment in children. Because our programs keep children in school and on the path to graduation, we reduce the need for additional community services and other forms of aid. Nationally, the average annual cost to re-house a family is about **\$20,000 to \$30,000**. And a recent study shared by the Eviction Lab found that when students change schools because of an eviction, they experience lower academic performance and increased odds of behavioral issues and school drop-out. Simply put, funds spent on stability efforts improve the lives of those being served while reducing the number of children and families who may need more intensive and expensive interventions.

We therefore ask that the Senate restore the Family Stability Programs TANF earmark at a level of \$1.5 million per fiscal year. We also ask that the Senate add back in the private matching requirements that have been included in each previous budget. This will allow the Siemer Institute and its partner United Ways to maintain its current service levels, and to continue to leverage private dollars.

I appreciate your time and consideration of our request. I am happy to answer any questions.