

Date: June 5, 2025

Chairman Cirino and Members of the Finance Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of restoring TANF funding for Big Brothers Big Sisters agencies across the state of Ohio. I respectfully urge the committee to reinstate \$1 million per fiscal year in TANF funding to support the essential mentoring work being conducted by Big Brothers Big Sisters.

Since 2014, this funding has allowed our agencies to create more than 500 new mentoring matches across Ohio each year, resulting in thousands of positive, life-changing relationships for children. It is important to note that we have never asked for an increase in this allocation. Rather, we have remained steadfast in our impact and efficiency, maximizing every dollar invested in our mission.

Here in Northwestern Ohio, TANF funding has been instrumental in sustaining and expanding our mentoring programs, particularly for youth facing adversity. Over the past several years, these dollars have enabled us to serve hundreds of children annually through one-to-one mentoring relationships that improve academic performance, increase social-emotional development, and provide critical support to families in crisis. This funding has not only helped us create new matches, it has ensured match longevity and program quality, resulting in measurable outcomes that position our youth for long-term success.

Governor DeWine recognized this value by including Big Brothers Big Sisters in his proposed budget at the same \$1 million level. Unfortunately, the recent substitute bill adopted by the Senate Finance Committee removed this funding from House Bill 96 altogether. The consequences of this decision would be devastating.

Without this support, more than 1,000 children across the state, many from vulnerable and underserved communities, would lose access to mentors who provide consistent encouragement, help guide them through life's challenges, and promote their mental health and academic achievement. These mentors become part of the family structure, offering vital support not just to the child, but to parents and caregivers as well.

Empowering Our Future Leaders One Match At A Time!

Phone: (419) 243-4600 **Address:** P.O. Box 1369, Toledo, OH 43603

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As CEO of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northwestern Ohio and a lifelong advocate for youth, I am deeply concerned about the future of these children if TANF funding is not restored. I urge you to reinstate the \$1 million allocation in HB 96 and affirm your commitment to Ohio's youth through continued investment in mentorship.

Thank you for your leadership and for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

Dr. Marvin Whitfield

Dr. Marvin Whitfield
Chief Executive Officer
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northwestern Ohio