

Good morning Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Timken, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Higher Education Committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 96.

I am a first year student studying Computer Science at Ohio State University, and I hope to use my degree to innovate new and exciting technologies in the realm of AI. However, the only reason that I am studying this field, at Ohio's flagship public university, is because I am a recipient of the Morrill Scholarship. This scholarship is awarded only to academically inclined, exceptionally driven students, and its main purpose is to expand access to education for those facing specific challenge factors that have made it harder for certain groups to pursue degrees.

The Morrill Scholarship is not alone in its mission to provide pathways to higher education at Ohio public colleges and universities. A similar program is the Ohio College Opportunity Grant, which lends a hand to students from families who may be struggling financially.

The index used to determine OCOG, the Student Aid Index, is calculated using data from the FAFSA and considers factors like family income, expected family contribution, and basic needs. This means that OCOG gives students, who would otherwise not be able to attend an institution of higher education, the opportunity to receive a degree or other job training.

It's fundamentally true that scholarships operate differently from other university programs, and it's important that they're considered as such. These are funds that go towards student success, and result in prosperous economic opportunities for our state. Every dollar is an investment in a future Ohio student. That's why I'm asking for a budget amendment to raise the amount allotted to OCOG from 2% of the state budget to 3%.

Today, I'm testifying to this committee on the behalf of my peers, but also for those future students who, like me, would otherwise not have the opportunity to pursue a college degree without access to scholarships like OCOG.

Through my scholarship community, I've been given the opportunity to meet with local employers, connect with fellow students from a wide range of backgrounds, and join the rising number of people from underrepresented groups who are pursuing careers in STEM fields.

I hope that this committee will continue supporting students like me who aim to innovate, achieve academic excellence, and make the world a better place.

Thank you for your time.

