



children's defense fund ohio

House Finance Committee

HB 33 – Interested Party Testimony

April 19, 2023

Kim Eckhart, Children's Defense Fund-Ohio

Chair Edwards, Vice Chair LeRe, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the House Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 33. I am here today to discuss HB 33's budget provisions in support of scholarships.

My name is Kim Echart and I am the interim director of the Children's Defense Fund-Ohio. Born out of the civil rights movement, with more than four decades of advocacy behind us, it is the mission of the Children's Defense Fund to champion policies and programs that lift children out of poverty, protect them from abuse and neglect, and ensure their access to appropriate and targeted health care, quality education, and nutritional wellness. We recognize that every child contributes to the vibrancy and success of our communities and are therefore driven to ensure every child and young person has opportunities to gain the social, economic, cultural and political capital they need to flourish into adulthood and give back to their communities.

HB 33, as introduced, does much to invest in youth as they prepare to transition to adulthood and pursue post-secondary options. This body is considering scaling some of those investments back, and I urge you to consider protecting investments for students with experience in foster care, specifically an amendment establishing the Foster-to-College Scholarship Act, [referenced as 135HB33-HC 135 2544](#).

As an organization, CDF-Ohio represents students who face the biggest barriers to postsecondary education. No young person's dreams and future aspirations should be deferred due to challenges created by poverty, abuse, and neglect. These students require additional support to even consider that college is an option, and ensuring every young person has options to pursue their career goals is not only morally just but in the best interest of our state's future prosperity, too. I was thrilled to see the Governor's proposed Mentoring Scholarship Program and the data that show that at-risk youth with a mentor are 36% more likely to enroll in postsecondary education. For years, I have been a mentor to high school students with a background in foster care, and I know from experience that a caring adult can make a huge difference in a young person's life. But more is still needed for those who face the toughest odds--students who, through no fault of their own, have experienced abuse or neglect and are placed in foster or kinship care.

Sadly, Ohio trails the nation in outcomes for teens who were in foster care – according to national data, Ohio youth were less likely to graduate high school or get a GED, obtain employment, be enrolled in school, and more likely to be justice-system involved than their peers across the nation. Ohio is in the bottom 10% of states across each of these measures. Scholarships for youth with experience in care can address these negative trajectories by giving students hope and footing for a fulfilling future. Research shows that students who know they

can pay for college are more likely to aspire to attend. Aspiring to attend college also motivates students to stay in school and keep their grades up.

During this budget, Ohio has an opportunity to join over 35 other states who offer scholarships to students with experience in foster care. Texas has had tuition waivers since 2015 and evidence since the establishment of this program shows that reducing financial barriers increases the likelihood that a student will complete their degree. A recent study shows that students who take advantage of Texas's policy of waiving all tuition and fees are 3.5 times more likely than their peers to graduate with a postsecondary degree. Imagine how much Ohio could benefit from helping more students in our state access opportunities to obtain the skills necessary for the 21st century workforce given the growth and partnership with new businesses that have come to Ohio over the past several years.

The state of Connecticut has been offering scholarships since at least 1968. I know that because my mom emancipated from foster care in Connecticut and the state paid for her to attend Marietta College here in Ohio. I also attended Marietta College because they offered me a scholarship as the daughter of an alum. My own story makes clear the enduring possibilities for intergenerational stability and opportunity that this type of investment can support and help realize for so many other Ohioans.

Today, 55 years after my mom received her scholarship, I am asking you to do the same for the young people of Ohio. I encourage you to adopt an amendment to HB33 to waive tuition and provide for the full cost of attendance for students who have been in foster care. This is not as costly as it sounds, because there is already a patchwork of aid available to students from federal, state, and private sources. Tuition waivers knit together this patchwork so that students don't have to navigate complex financial aid processes on their own.

This policy can have a multi-generational impact, as I have personally experienced, and is a fiscally responsible investment in the future of Ohio. I encourage you to make a commitment to support all students to achieve their highest potential. I appreciate having the opportunity to provide testimony today and I would be happy to answer any questions that you have. Thank you.

_____ moved to amend as follows:

1 In line 192 of the title, after "3301.91," insert
2 "3301.95,"

3 In line 197 of the title, after "3333.394," insert
4 "3333.89,"

5 In line 591, after "3301.91," insert "3301.95,"

6 In line 595, after "3333.394," insert "3333.89,"

7 After line 34338, insert:

8 **"Sec. 3301.95. (A) As used in this section:**

9 (1) "School of origin" means the school in which a student
10 was enrolled at the time of each placement into foster care. If
11 the student's foster care placement changes, the school of
12 origin is the school in which the student is enrolled at the
13 time of the change in placement. "School of origin" includes the
14 designated receiving school at the next grade level for feeder
15 school or zone patterns when the student completes the final
16 grade level served by the school of origin. When there is more
17 than one potential school of origin, the department of
18 education, or school foster care liaison under division (B) of

19 this section, shall designate the school of origin using the
20 student's input.

21 (2) "Student placed in foster care" means a child who at
22 any time during an academic semester or term is in foster care,
23 including any child who is in the custody of a public children's
24 services agency or private child placing agency or otherwise
25 placed with a licensed foster caregiver. "Student placed in
26 foster care" includes a child who transfers enrollment as a
27 result of being returned to the child's home at the conclusion
28 of the child's placement.

29 (B) If the superintendent of public instruction determines
30 that sufficient funds are available from general revenue fund
31 appropriations made to the department of education, the
32 department shall hire a full-time school foster care liaison.
33 The school foster care liaison shall work with public children
34 services agencies, private child placing agencies, and the
35 department of job and family services to facilitate services to
36 keep students placed in foster care in the student's school of
37 origin or, if the public children services agency or private
38 child placing agency determines that it is not in a student's
39 best interest to remain in the school of origin, facilitate the
40 prompt and appropriate placement, transfer, and enrollment of
41 such a student in another public school.

42 The school foster care liaison's specific duties include:

43 (1) Responding to a request from a public children services
44 agency or private child placing agency for input from a school
45 district or school concerning the determination of whether it is
46 in the best interest of the student placed in foster care to
47 remain in the school of origin;

48 (2) Collaborating with the public children services agency
49 or private child placing agency to ensure that any necessary
50 transportation and services are provided for the student placed
51 in foster care to remain in the student's school of origin;

52 (3) If a public children services agency or private child
53 placing agency determines that it is not in the student's best
54 interest to remain in the school of origin, working with the
55 agency, juvenile probation officer, parents, guardian ad litem
56 or counsel for the student, and foster caregivers to ensure that
57 the student is enrolled in a new school immediately with
58 transition planning, and that the student's complete education
59 information and records are requested immediately by the
60 student's new school upon enrollment;

61 (4) Upon receiving the required notification and
62 invitation, participating in a transition planning meeting
63 regarding the enrollment in a public school of a student placed
64 in foster care from a state-licensed day treatment facility, or
65 hospital, or having a designee participate in the meeting;

66 (5) Participating, or having the liaison's designee
67 participate, in any interagency collaboration team or threat
68 assessment team centered on students placed in foster care,
69 which the school district or school may develop or on which the
70 school district or school may be invited to participate;

71 (6) Providing students placed in foster care with
72 information about the foster-to-college scholarship program
73 established in section 3333.89 of the Revised Code."

74 After line 46533, insert:

75 **"Sec. 3333.89.** (A) As used in this section:

76 (1) "Chafee ETV grant" means an educational and training
77 voucher program grant made pursuant to the "John H. Chafee
78 Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood," 42
79 U.S.C. 677.

80 (2) "Cost of attendance" has the same meaning as in section
81 3333.37 of the Revised Code.

82 (3) "Federal need analysis" means the methodology
83 determined by the United States department of education to
84 determine the amount of a student's financial need to pay for
85 postsecondary education.

86 (4) "Institution of higher education" has the same meaning
87 as in section 3345.19 of the Revised Code.

88 (5) "Noncertified kinship care" means a public children
89 services agency or private child placing agency has placed a

90 child in the care of a kinship caregiver, as defined in section
91 5101.85 of the Revised Code, who has not met the requirements
92 for a foster home certificate issued under section 5103.03 of
93 the Revised Code or has chosen not to pursue that certificate.

94 (6) "Qualifying student" means a resident of Ohio as
95 defined in section 3333.31 of the Revised Code, who has been
96 accepted for enrollment at an institution of higher education
97 who has been placed in either of the following:

98 (a) Foster care at any time on or after the student's
99 thirteenth birthday;

100 (b) Noncertified kinship care at any time on or after the
101 student's thirteenth birthday and was, at any time, adjudicated
102 an abused child as defined in section 2151.031 of the Revised
103 Code, a neglected child as defined in section 2151.03 of the
104 Revised Code, or a dependent child as defined in section 2151.04
105 of the Revised Code.

106 (B) (1) The foster-to-college scholarship program is
107 established. Under the program, beginning in the 2023-2024
108 academic year, each qualifying student shall be awarded a
109 foster-to-college scholarship based on the student's federal
110 need analysis. The amount of the foster-to-college scholarship
111 shall equal the applicant's recognized cost of attendance after
112 deducting all of the following:

113 (a) The student aid index as calculated by the federal need
114 analysis;

115 (b) The amount of any federal Pell grant award for which
116 the applicant is eligible;

117 (c) The amount of any state grant;

118 (d) The federal supplemental educational opportunity grant;

119 (e) The Ohio college opportunity grant, under section
120 3333.122 of the Revised Code;

121 (f) The amount of any other state and federal gift aid;

122 (g) The Chafee ETV grant;

123 (h) Extended foster care benefits under 42 U.S.C.
124 675(8)(B);

125 (i) The amount of any private grants or scholarships,
126 excluding grants and scholarships provided by the private
127 institution of higher education in which the eligible student is
128 enrolled;

129 (j) For public institutions, the sum of all institutional
130 grants, scholarships, tuition waivers, and tuition remission
131 amounts.

132 (2) The foster scholarship shall be paid directly to the
133 participating institution of higher education in which the
134 student is enrolled.

135 (3) An eligible private institution may choose not to
136 participate in the foster-to-college scholarship program

137 established under this section. To opt out, the institution
138 shall provide notice to the chancellor of higher education by
139 the first day of September for the next academic year.

140 (4) An eligible private institution that chooses to
141 participate in the program and accepts a student's application
142 to attend the institution shall provide institutional grants,
143 scholarships, tuition waivers, or tuition remission in an amount
144 equal to the difference between the institution's cost of
145 attendance and the sum of the scholarship under this division
146 and the sum of the amounts in division (B) (1) (a) to (j) of this
147 section.

148 (C) In order to receive a scholarship under the program,
149 the qualifying student shall do all of the following:

150 (1) Complete the federal free application for student aid,
151 including acknowledgement of past or current foster care
152 placement;

153 (2) If eligible, complete the application for a Chafee ETV
154 grant;

155 (3) Be enrolled in courses leading toward a bachelor's
156 degree, a postgraduate degree, an associate's degree, an
157 industry-recognized credential, or a certificate of completion
158 at an institution of higher education;

159 (4) Request financial assistance in accordance with
160 policies set forth by the institution of higher education;

161 (5) Remain in satisfactory academic standing in accordance
162 with the academic policies of the institution of higher
163 education and be making progress toward completion of the
164 requirements of the educational program in which the student is
165 enrolled.

166 (D)(1) Eligible students shall apply to participate in the
167 program in a form and manner prescribed by the chancellor. The
168 chancellor shall approve each qualifying student who applies and
169 who has a remaining cost of attendance for the period in which
170 the application is approved after all other financial aid for
171 which that applicant qualifies has been applied to the
172 applicant's account at the institution. The chancellor shall
173 approve applications in the order in which they are received.
174 The amount of scholarships awarded shall not exceed the amount
175 appropriated for that purpose.

176 (2) The chancellor shall pay to each institution of higher
177 education in which a participant who receives a scholarship
178 described in division (B) of this section is enrolled the amount
179 of the scholarship awarded under that division.

180 (E) The chancellor shall enter into an agreement with the
181 same organization engaged by the department of job and family
182 services to administer the Chafee ETV program to employ four
183 full-time employees to serve as foster care student navigators
184 and assist prospective qualifying students in applying for and

185 enrolling in institutions of higher education and the foster-to-
186 college scholarship program. The navigators shall work with
187 school district and school foster care liaisons to identify
188 prospective qualifying students. A navigator shall provide
189 guidance to prospective qualifying students with selecting
190 institutions and programs in which the student may wish to
191 enroll. A navigator shall, at the request of a student, assist
192 the student with completing an institution's application for
193 admission, the free application for federal student aid, and, if
194 eligible, the application for a Chafee ETV grant.

195 (F)(1) The chancellor shall, in accordance with Chapter
196 119. of the Revised Code, adopt rules necessary to administer
197 this section.

198 (2) Notwithstanding any provision of section 121.95 of the
199 Revised Code to the contrary, a regulatory restriction contained
200 in a rule adopted under division (F) of this section is not
201 subject to sections 121.95 to 121.953 of the Revised Code."

202 After line 158893a, insert:

203 "5xxx 235xxx Foster-to-College Scholarship \$7,500,000
204 \$7,500,000"

205 In line 158896, add \$7,500,000 to each fiscal year

206 In line 158908, add \$7,500,000 to each fiscal year

207 After line 160575, insert:

208 "**Section 381.____.** FOSTER-TO-COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP

HC2544

209 The foregoing appropriation item 235xxx, Foster-to-College
210 Scholarship, shall be used by the Chancellor of Higher Education
211 to support the Foster-to-College Scholarship Program pursuant to
212 section 3333.89 of the Revised Code.

213 Of the foregoing appropriation item 235xxx, Foster-to-
214 College Scholarship, a portion in each fiscal year may be
215 allocated to the same organization engaged by the Department of
216 Job and Family Services to administer the Chafee ETV Program to
217 employ four full-time foster care student navigators pursuant to
218 division (E) of section 3333.89 of the Revised Code.

219 An amount equal to the unexpended, unencumbered balance of
220 the foregoing appropriation item 235xxx, Foster-to-College
221 Scholarship, at the end of fiscal year 2024 is hereby
222 reappropriated for the same purpose in fiscal year 2025."

223 In line 162581, after "(A)" insert "\$15,000,000 cash to the
224 Foster-to-College Scholarship Fund (Fund 5xxx), which is hereby
225 created in the state treasury;

226 (B) "

227 In line 162583, delete "(B)" and insert "(C) "

228 In line 162584, delete "(C)" and insert "(D) "

229 In line 162586, delete "(D)" and insert "(E) "

230 In line 162588, delete "(E)" and insert "(F) "

231 In line 162590, delete "(F)" and insert "(G) "

232 In line 162592, delete "(G)" and insert "(H) "

- 233 In line 162594, delete "(H)" and insert "(I)"
- 234 In line 162596, delete "(I)" and insert "(J)"
- 235 In line 162598, delete "(J)" and insert "(K)"
- 236 In line 162600, delete "(K)" and insert "(L)"
- 237 In line 162602, delete "(L)" and insert "(M)"
- 238 In line 162604, delete "(M)" and insert "(N)"
- 239 In line 162606, delete "(N)" and insert "(O)"
- 240 In line 162608, delete "(O)" and insert "(P)"
- 241 In line 162610, delete "(P)" and insert "(Q)"
- 242 In line 162612, delete "(Q)" and insert "(R)"

243 The motion was _____ agreed to.

244 SYNOPSIS

245 **Foster-to-College Scholarship Program**

246 **R.C. 3333.89**

247 Establishes the Foster-to-College Scholarship Program under
248 which institutions of higher education must award a scholarship
249 for the remaining cost of attendance after all financial aid is
250 applied for students who were in foster care or noncertified
251 kinship care on or after the child's 13th birthday.

252 Permits an eligible private institution to opt out of
253 participating by providing notice to the Chancellor of Higher
254 Education by the first day of September for the next academic
255 year.

256 Requires participating private institutions to provide
257 institutional grants, scholarships, tuition waivers, or tuition
258 remission in an amount equal to the difference between the

259 institution's cost of attendance and the sum of the foster
260 scholarship and other financial aid the student receives.

261 Requires a qualifying student do the following to
262 participate in the program:

263 (1) Complete the federal Free Application for Student Aid
264 (FAFSA);

265 (2) Complete the application for a Chafee ETV grant;

266 (3) Be enrolled in courses leading to a bachelor's degree,
267 a postgraduate degree, associate degree, industry recognized
268 credential, or a certificate of completion at an institution of
269 higher education;

270 (4) Request financial assistance in the manner required by
271 the institution;

272 (5) Remain in satisfactory academic standing in accordance
273 with the academic policies of the institution and be making
274 progress toward completion of the requirements of the
275 educational program in which the student is enrolled.

276 Requires the Chancellor to approve applications on a
277 first-come first-served basis not to exceed the amounts
278 appropriated for that purpose.

279 Requires the Department of Higher Education to enter into
280 an agreement with an entity that administers the Chafee ETV
281 program for the Department of Job and Family Services to employ
282 four full-time employees to serve as foster care student
283 navigators to work with school districts and foster care
284 liaisons to identify qualifying students.

285 **School foster care liaisons**

286 **R.C. 3301.95**

287 Requires the Department of Education, if the Superintendent
288 of Public Instruction determines that the General Assembly has
289 appropriated sufficient funds to do so, to hire a full-time
290 school foster care liaison responsible for working with public
291 children services agencies (PCSA), private child placing
292 agencies (PCPA), and the Department of Job and Family Services
293 to facilitate services to maintain students placed in foster
294 care in their schools of origin.

295 If a PCSA or PCPA, determines that it is not in a student's
296 best interest to remain in the school of origin, requires the
297 foster care liaison to facilitate the prompt and appropriate
298 placement, transfer, and enrollment in school of such a student
299 in a different school within the school district or in other
300 public schools.

301 **Department of Higher Education**

302 **Sections 381.10, 381.____, and 513.10**

303 Establishes Fund 5xxx ALI 235xxx, Foster-to-College
304 Scholarship, with appropriations of \$7,500,000 in each fiscal
305 year, to be used by the Chancellor of Higher Education to
306 support the Foster-to-College Scholarship Program.

307 Permits a portion of ALI 235xxx in each fiscal year to be
308 allocated to the same organization engaged by ODJFS to
309 administer the Chafee ETV program to employ four full-time
310 foster care student navigators to assist with the Program's
311 operation.

312 Reappropriates the available balance of ALI 235xxx at the
313 end of FY 2024 for the same purpose in FY 2025.

314 Requires the OBM Director to transfer \$15,000,000 cash from
315 the FY 2023 GRF ending balance to the newly created Foster-to-
316 College Scholarship Fund (Fund 5xxx).