



October 20, 2020

Dear Governor DeWine,

The *Overcoming Hurdles in Ohio Youth Advisory Board* serves as the statewide youth advisory board of young people, ages 14 - 24 years old, who have experienced foster care. *ACTION Ohio (Alumni of Care Together Improving Outcomes Now)* is a statewide foster care alumni group that exists to improve outcomes after foster care.

We are writing to thank you for inviting us to today's virtual bill-signing of House Bill 8, to express our regrets that due to work and school commitments we will be unable to attend, and to propose a follow-up effort to ***Make Every Training Hour Count*** when it comes to effectiveness.

We have been in touch with Representative Manchester and her office, and we respect her work and are grateful that she cares about the shortage of foster parents in Ohio. Lack of available foster families has led to foster youth being left in county child welfare offices, sent to residential facilities, and placed out of county, and even out of state. We understand that the goals of House Bill 8 are for potential foster parents to be trained, licensed and approved in a more expeditious matter.

Expanding Ohio's network of foster parents is a great first step – and the next step forward should be to ***Make Every Training Hour Count*** by equipping Ohio foster parents as subject matter experts. As one of our members, Jaye Turner, shared in recent testimony to the Ohio Child Welfare Transformation Council: *Foster care is more than just a place to stay; it is a place to connect, educate and grow.*

Current decisions regarding which training courses to attend are often based on “***getting enough hours***” rather than focusing on the content that will be most vital to their role. One of the tenets of effective training is transfer of learning. It isn't enough just to “***get enough hours***” if the trainings attended are not specifically targeted to translate into practice/action.

The vision of Ohio foster care youth and alumni is for Ohio to ***Make Every Training Hour Count*** through training tracks, followed by specialized certifications:

- Training tracks and subsequent certification would prepare and equip foster parents to meet the specific needs of the children and teens they serve. Each training track would lead to specialty certifications, thereby facilitating the ongoing growth of foster parents and empowering them as Subject Matter Experts.
- For example, PCSAO has been working with others to design three tiers of foster care, paired with a focus on the professionalization of foster parents and capacity building to prepare and support foster parents to meet the needs of youth.
- Likewise, foster parents and caseworkers that serve teens could be empowered to participate in a training track that includes *in-depth knowledge of available resources to support foster youth in navigating young adulthood.*

We truly believe that the next step forward is to ***Make Every Training Hour Count*** and we would love to assist with this effort. Several of our members are certified trainers within the Ohio Child Welfare Training Program. We have written curriculum for the Bridges program, facilitated workshops for foster parents and caseworkers, and led Core training. Ohio foster care youth and alumni are eager to help design and develop training tracks, and to write future curriculum for this effort.

The first training track that we would like to work on would be to empower and support caseworkers and foster parents who serve teens to pair them with resource knowledge to support their transition into adulthood. There are specific categories of resources that every Ohio foster care teen deserves to be informed about and connected with, such as academic support, post-secondary support, career/vocational, health, housing and legal resources.

Too often, teens in foster care feel forgotten or unequipped to face life after foster care. This is why we care so deeply about the need to ***Make Every Training Hour Count*** when it comes to preparing and equipping foster parents (and caseworkers) to meet the needs of teens.

Here are some of the faces of our youth leaders, reminding others to please: “Don’t forget to foster my future.”



Thank you for your ongoing dedication to the needs of Ohio's foster care youth,

Roman Sandhu  
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Overcoming Hurdles in Ohio Youth Advisory Board  
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