

POVERTY AND PRE-SCHOOL SUBGROUP

Co-chair, Cupp and Patterson, and members of the Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education, I appreciate the opportunity to be here and speak with you this morning. My name is Claudia Zaler, Treasurer/CFO at Waverly City Schools in Pike county, and prior to working in education a fiscal specialist for Scioto County Community Action and public accountant. While I am not an Ohio native, I have always been a small town girl where everyone knows each other and communities come together like family, working together for the greater good. That is just what the Fair School Funding workgroup has been doing for the past 15 months or more. So far this week you have heard testimony from other members about base cost, distribution and some of the add-ons. Today I am here with my co-chair, Newark City Schools Superintendent, Douglas Ute, of the Poverty and Pre-school subgroup of the Fair School Funding workgroup.

Doug and I heard from multiple early childhood stakeholders regarding the need for an enhanced provision of early childhood education. We would like to thank Senator Peggy Lehner, Senate District 6, Dr. Howard Fleeter, Economist, Aaron Rausch, Ohio Department of Education and all the early childhood stakeholders for their assistance and insight on pre-school, and Mr. Jim Betts for coordinating our meetings and keeping us on point.

Issues relating to Pre-school access

Research overwhelmingly indicates that a high quality pre-school experience is beneficial to children as they enter kindergarten.

However, Ohio currently has a very fragmented delivery system of pre-school services with providers funded by Head Start, Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) (the Public Funded Childcare program) and Ohio Department of

Education (Early Childhood Education Grants and Pre-school special education services).

Additionally, each of the above mentioned programs have different eligibility criteria (Head Start = 100% of Federal Poverty Level (FPL), ODJFS PFCC – 130% of FPL, ODE ECE grants = 200% of FPL, pre-school special education service = no income criteria).

Data clearly shows that far too many economically disadvantage children in Ohio do not currently receive the benefit of quality pre-school.

Transportation of 3 and 4 year olds provide challenges for many school districts, particularly those in the state's rural areas.

Pre-School Recommendations

It is strongly recommended that by the 2020-2021 school year, every four (4) year old who is identified as economically disadvantaged be guaranteed access to at least one (1) year of high quality pre-school.

Additionally, it is also strongly recommended that identification activities be enhanced to guarantee that all children who should qualify for pre-school are identified.

It is recommended that every Educational Service Center (ESC) in Ohio be funded for the creation of the position of Community Pre-school Director to coordinate early childhood services.

Recommend that districts consider exploring partnerships with Head Start or other agencies as one option for addressing transportation.

It is recommended that the state authorize and fund a study to examine the various methods used to fund, deliver and coordinate high quality pre-school and wraparound services to accommodate the needs of various types of communities.

To improve school outcomes and increase the lifelong success of our children, workforce, and economy, Ohio needs to ensure that high quality early education be made available for economic disadvantaged children.

Co-chair, Cupp and Patterson, thank you for your time.