



Chairman Hite, Vice Chair Sykes, and the members of the Senate Finance Primary and Secondary Education Subcommittee. My name is Katie Kelly, and I am the director of PRE4CLE, Cleveland's plan to expand access to high-quality preschool for all three and four-year-olds. I appreciate the opportunity to share with you my testimony related to the state operating budget today.

In 2013, only 16% of Cleveland's children entering kindergarten were fully prepared to succeed on Ohio's Kindergarten Readiness Assessment. Research nationally and in Cleveland shows that children who enter kindergarten below the readiness level struggle to catch up, often falling and staying behind in reading and math through their school careers. The Cleveland community realized we must act with urgency, intention, and strategic collaboration to address one of our greatest education challenges – school readiness.

In Cleveland, we are investing local funding including \$7.5 million from CMSD, \$1 million from Cuyahoga County, and \$2.1 in philanthropic and corporate support. Additionally, PRE4CLE worked alongside Cuyahoga County and private philanthropic and business leaders to advocate for and secure \$22.8 million in public-private investment for Universal Pre-K, Cuyahoga County's high-quality preschool model shown to produce great results for Cleveland's children. A list of the private funders supporting the UPK expansion and a list of PRE4CLE's leadership is attached to your testimony.

PRE4CLE partners with public and private preschool providers to help them improve the quality of their programs and expand the number of high-quality seats available to families. PRE4CLE also works directly with parents and families to provide information about the importance of high-quality preschool and provide the tools and resources they need to find the right opportunity for their child.

Since PRE4CLE began in 2014, we have helped to accelerate the expansion of high-quality preschool in Cleveland, increasing enrollment in high-quality preschool by 50%. We see the impact of these increases in our kindergarten readiness results. In fall of 2015, only 27% of children without a known preschool experience were designated as "on track" for literacy readiness at kindergarten entry into the Cleveland School District; among children who experienced high-quality preschool that number increased to 47.2%.

While PRE4CLE and its partners are making significant improvement in Cleveland's neighborhoods and throughout the Cuyahoga County, our continued success is contingent upon

a strong partnership with the state. Meeting the needs of Ohio’s most at-risk children is a responsibility that we share, and additional support is needed through partnerships with the state to reach the goal of taking PRE4CLE to scale.

Ohio’s response to all of the empirical data supporting early investments in high-quality interventions was the establishment of the Step Up to Quality Program (SUTQ) with the goal of increasing access to high-quality programs. In SUTQ, early care and education programs earn 1- to 5-Star ratings based on meeting nationally researched quality program standards administered by ODJFS.

As the state continues to work to achieve the goals set out in the previous budget (see table below), challenges continue to exist. First, the state has 38 counties that are categorized incorrectly in the state’s reimbursement system- to the disadvantage of the programs and children being served in those counties. Currently, 13,800 children receive a lower rate from the state for child care than the state’s assessments indicate they should receive. This lack of funding is equal to an average of \$20,000 funding gap per child care preschool classroom in Cuyahoga County. These dollars would pay for quality enhancements such as more qualified teachers, increased professional development, early learning supplies, and other quality program essentials. The result of this funding gap is lower-quality child care for our state’s most at-risk young children and decreased kindergarten readiness. The full list of impacted counties is included in my testimony before you.

<b>State Goals for Providers to be rated high-quality (3-5 stars)*</b>	
June 30, 2017	25%
June 30, 2019	40%
June 30, 2021	60%
June 30, 2023	80%
June 30, 2025	100%

*\*To achieve these quality goals the state requires all programs receiving state dollars for to be rated (no matter what star level) by 2020. Currently only 35% of programs are even rated with just 13.2% rated as high quality.*

Allen, Ashland, Athens, Auglaize, Belmont, Carroll, Clark, Columbiana, Cuyahoga, Darke, Erie, Fairfield, Green, Hancock, Harrison, Highland, Huron, Knox, Lake, Lawrence, Licking, Logan, Lucas, Miami, Monroe, Morrow, Ottawa, Pickaway, Portage, Preble, Sandusky, Seneca, Shelby, Stark, Trumbull, Union, Wayne, and Wood.

***Recommendation: We are requesting that child care programs rated through the state’s Step Up To Quality rating system for early learning be moved to the correct rating category to serve our most at-risk children.***

The second budget request, again, is intended to support both the needs of our community and state’s most at-risk children and also the quality and enrollment goals set by the state. From

1990-2016, Ohio's Early Childhood Education (ECE) program included three-year-olds because the research shows that two years of preschool greatly increases kindergarten readiness and school success. While the state has increased funding for the ECE program during the past two state budgets, a shift was made in 2014 that permitted only four-year-olds to participate in the program. This shift has come at a cost to the state's most at-risk children who we know are more likely to succeed in school and life when enrolled in high-quality preschool for at least two years. It also comes at a cost to the state's efforts to increase enrollment and access to high-quality preschool for families throughout the state.

***Recommendation: We are recommending that the state return to the policy of allowing three-year-olds to participate in the ECE program.***

Thank you for the opportunity to share these recommendations. I am happy to answer any questions you have.