

**Ohio House of Representatives
Families, Aging & Human Services
House Bill 145
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Ohio Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics
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Chairman Manchester, Vice Chair Cutrona, Ranking Member West and members of the committee, my name is Dr. Jessica A. Nash. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on House Bill 145, which would expand initial child care eligibility from 130% of the Federal Poverty Level to 200% of the Federal Poverty Level. I am here representing the Ohio Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics, which represents over 2,900 pediatricians and pediatricians in training in Ohio, as well as Nationwide Children's Hospital where I am a resident in pediatrics.

Only 40% of our children in the state of Ohio are demonstrating readiness for kindergarten. Demonstrating means that the child entered kindergarten with sufficient skills, knowledge, and abilities to engage with kindergarten-level instruction. This is in large part due to the lack of access to adequate, high quality childcare during the crucial, early years of age 0-3. In the state of Ohio, the average cost of childcare without any financial assistance is about \$10,000 for center-based care and about \$7,500 for in-home childcare. Childcare costs are a definite burden to so many parents in Ohio. The high cost forces many parents to send their children to family members' homes for childcare instead of a highly qualified childcare facility. This places those children without adequate preparation for school, behind their peers once they begin kindergarten and makes them less likely to pass their third grade reading assessment.

Some families qualify for Public Funded Child Care (PFCC) which helps to cover the costs of childcare at a highly qualified facility. However, the current eligibility requirements do not cover many families, leaving parents to struggle to pay for childcare. Currently the maximum income for eligibility for financial assistance is 130% above the poverty level, which is an income of about \$1868 per month, which equals about \$22,916 per year. An annual income of \$22,000 would be difficult for anyone to adequately provide for their families. Even those families with an income of \$40,000 per year would still struggle to provide for their family with having to contribute about a quarter of their income to childcare. This leaves parents to not work to advance their careers in fear of losing their daycare assistance if their income increases. So not only are our families unable to achieve financial stability and security, but our children are also inadequately prepared for school and the cycle of poverty continues. Outside of the PFCC grants, there is little to no other financial help for families who do not meet the income eligibility requirements of PFCC. This needs to change. All our families deserve access to highly qualified childcare to properly prepare them for school and success in the future.

As a mother myself of two sons, I understand the financial struggles associated with paying for childcare expenses. My husband and I both work full time jobs but we also struggled to pay for childcare. We did not make enough money to comfortably afford

childcare expenses but made too much money to qualify for any assistance. At a highly qualified childcare facility for our children, we paid \$2200 a month. We were able to sustain this payment for a few months, but ultimately had to remove our children from this facility and place them into a home childcare due to the financial strain that it caused. So, I empathize with the parents who want the best childcare and education for their children but are unable to provide it because they are just unable to afford it. In addition, some of our parents lack the adequate educational background to educate their children and being in a highly qualified childcare facility is their children's mainstay of education. If we do not contribute more to the early years for our children, we place them at an unfair disadvantage in their road to success.

It is my greatest hope that you will vote to support House Bill 145 and invest in our young children in a way that will change their lives forever. For every \$1 that we invest in our children now is projected to have a \$7-\$13 return on investment. This is an opportunity that we cannot miss. Supporting this bill will support our children, hard-working families, and our economy. Ohio's children need and deserve a strong foundation and investing in early childhood education will help to establish this strong foundation and a chance at lifelong success.