



House Families, Aging, and Human Services Committee

April 15, 2021

Proponent Testimony – HB 145

Franklin County Board of Commissioners

Kevin L. Boyce, President

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Good morning Chair Manchester, Vice Chair Cutrona, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the House Families, Aging, and Human Services Committee. My name is Bart Logan and I'm the Deputy Director of Communications for the Franklin County Department of Job and Family Services. Thank you for allowing me to offer testimony on behalf of the Franklin County Board of Commissioners in support of House Bill 145. Increasing the eligibility threshold for the publicly funded child care (PFCC) program will strengthen Ohio families by supporting working parents as well as the educational, social and emotional development of their children.

In 2018, Franklin County embarked on a community wide planning process to build upon existing initiatives and develop new strategies to reduce the prevalence of poverty and racial and economic disparities within our community. This effort solicited the expertise and input from public, private, and nonprofit sector leaders and residents through one-on-one interviews, group listening sessions, organizational stakeholder engagement, and the examination of research and best practices from across the country. This work culminated in the development of the Franklin County Rise Together Poverty Blueprint which prescribes strategies and makes recommendations for improving economic mobility, family stability, and equitable access to opportunity across Central Ohio.

Recurring throughout the development of this Blueprint were themes about the types of supportive services that help individuals access and sustain employment and grow earnings over time. The availability and affordability of child care repeatedly rose to the top in terms of vital work supports reported in research and reflected in the feedback of Franklin County families. The focus in this feedback was on a need to expand access to child care that not only sustains families but also helps them grow earnings without risking the loss of supportive services before those earnings rise to a sustainable level.

Many working families must weigh earnings and potential earnings against the cost of child care; that balance is even more precarious for low-income families struggling to meet their basic needs. Costs of child care vary depending on the setting, care structure, and provider accreditation, and Child Care Aware of America estimates the cost of child care in Ohio ranges from \$7,000 to \$11,000 per year, per child. As we know, the burden of any fixed cost rises as income declines, and the National Women's Law Center found that families between 100 and 200 percent of the federal poverty level (between \$21,330 and \$42,660 a year for a family of three) pay an average of 20 percent of family income on child care, while families below the federal poverty line with children under five spend an average of 36 percent of their income on child care. Only two states have a lower income eligibility threshold than Ohio's 130 percent of the federal poverty level – and no state sets the bar lower when considered as a percentage of the median income (just 39 percent). A minimum eligibility threshold of at least 200 percent of the federal poverty level to qualify for publicly funded child care will help relieve this staggering and opportunity-limiting cost burden and smooth the transition for families as they seek to sustain and grow their earnings over time.

As we learn more about early brain development, it has become more and more clear that early childhood learning – from exposure to reading and verbal skills to building social skills – is every bit as important as K through 12 education. In addition to supporting work opportunities for parents, expanded access to quality child care under the publicly funded child care program promises healthy development and long-term success for children of these working parents as well. Over 23,000 children in Franklin County receive child care through Step Up to Quality star-rated PFCC providers—providers that have met the state’s standards for safe, caring, and educational environments to help children learn and grow. Expanding eligibility for this program will allow more Franklin County children to access these nurturing environments, thereby improving their trajectories in health, wellness, and educational attainment outcomes. Investing now in expanding access to high-quality early learning builds our future workforce, and in the long-term will boost our economy and save taxpayer money on other services.

We support HB 145 as a structural adjustment to ensure the publicly funded child care program serves its intended goals, and we ask for your favorable consideration of this transformative change for Ohio families.