



Representatives Dani Isaacsohn & Bride Rose Sweeney

Sponsor Testimony

House Bill 570 Child Care

December 3, 2024

Rep. Isaacsohn

Chair Edwards, Vice Chair LaRe, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the House Finance Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony, along with my joint sponsor Representative Sweeney, on House Bill 570. This bill would extend publicly funded child care benefits to child care staff members.

Child care professionals are the backbone of our communities, as they enable parents to work or pursue an education, which benefits our economy. Child care professionals are so important to our society, the state of Ohio deemed them essential workers during the Covid-19 pandemic, alongside hospital staff and first responders. Despite the state's recognition of this crucial work, child care professionals still face low wages and limited benefits, leading to high turnover rates and staffing shortages. This instability directly affects the quality of care children receive and the lives of the families relying on these services. HB 570 addresses these challenges by ensuring child care workers have access to publicly funded child care benefits themselves, alleviating a financial burden for professionals in this discipline and enhancing workforce retention all around.

Child care services strengthen our economy. They allow for parents and families to have supervision over their children while they participate in the workforce. Without quality, affordable child care, parents have no choice but to leave the workforce to care for their families instead. In 2024, the US Chamber of Commerce reported about 60% of parents' reason for leaving the workforce was due to inadequate child care options. Because of this employment loss due to child care issues, Ohio's economy estimates an annual loss of \$3.9 billion.[1] We need parents to go to work, which means we need child care services to be available, of good standard, and staffed by consistent, quality professionals. Providing free child care to those working in this field would attract more workers to take on these jobs, and encourage them to stay.

Our neighboring state Kentucky implemented a similar program in 2022, which made all child care employees eligible for free child care for their own kids.[2] The state saw a similar problem emerge in their own communities, not enough child care workers leading to a decrease in employment rates, and decided to put this incentive program in place. Within the first year of its implementation, they already saw the payout with over three thousand parents participating in the program, and over five thousand kids benefiting from it. Because of Kentucky's success, many other states are jumping on this idea, as well, including Indiana, Iowa, and Nebraska. [3]

Rep. Sweeney

In the last several years, as the childcare crisis in Ohio has continued to grow, I have had the opportunity to speak to many childcare professionals in my district & across the state. Childcare providers report struggling to keep their doors open because they can't keep up with rising wages or they don't have enough staff on hand. Many providers openly acknowledge that their small business is spending more money than they take in every month and they tell us that most of the providers who are left are only there because they are deeply passionate about their work, not because it makes financial sense. I recently spoke with a provider who is already providing a similar childcare benefit to her employees out of sheer necessity—she wouldn't have been able to keep her staff otherwise. She told me that legislation like HB 570 would be a game changer for her small business and finally provide her and her employees a desperately needed break from the crushing burden of financing these solutions on their own.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Ohio already has a record low number of child care workers; between 2019 and 2023, child care employment levels dropped by 26%.^[4] The childcare industry in Ohio also suffers from high rates of staff turnover. In 2022, job turnover in the child care sector was 65% higher than turnover in “typical occupations.”^[5] This lack of staffing and high rate of turnover hurts workers, hurts small businesses, and hurts Ohio families. Ohio also has an eligibility problem—our state ranks 50th in the country in eligibility, meaning you have to be incredibly low income before you can start qualifying for any kind of subsidy for childcare. Under this bill, however, childcare workers will automatically qualify for publicly funded child care, ensuring more Ohio families have access to affordable child care while also incentivizing providers to join or stay in the child care workforce.

Child care professionals dedicate their lives to ensuring children have a safe and nurturing environment to learn and grow in. It is time the state of Ohio recognizes this essential work by providing them with the support they need to sustain their work and livelihood effectively.

Chair Edwards, Vice Chair LaRe and all members of the Finance Committee, thank you for your consideration. We look forward to any questions you may have.

[1] [Child care crisis in Ohio: A call to action for business leaders](#)

[2] [Kentucky had an outside-the-box idea to fix child care worker shortages. It's working](#)

[3] [At Least a Dozen States Are Considering Free Child Care for Early Educators](#)

[4] [Do you want to work where the people are? These jobs are most common in areas with high \(or low\) population growth, Child Care Funding Cliff at One Year: Rising Prices, Shrinking Options, and Families Squeezed](#)

[5] [Using Worker Flows to Assess the Stability of the Early Childcare and Education Workforce, 2010-2022](#)