



Ohio Association for the Education of Young Children

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Testimony Of

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Ohio House Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services

Governor DeWine's Executive Budget Proposal

Chairman Carruthers, Ranking Member Dr. Liston, and members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services, I am honored to provide my testimony on Governor DeWine's Executive Budget.

My name is Kimberly Tice, and I am the Executive Director of the Ohio Association for the Education of Young Children. Ohio AEYC is a statewide professional association representing close to 2,000 members while also supporting the entire early childhood profession across Ohio.

**Ohio Department of Children and Youth**

We applaud Governor DeWine's proposal to establish a Cabinet-level agency devoted exclusively to serving children and youth. By unifying the work under one umbrella - with children at the core of its mission, this new department will improve the delivery of services to children and families depending on these essential state programs.

The General Assembly, state agencies and frontline workers in our child care system are presented with both a challenge and an opportunity with the creation of a new state department. The challenge is that this will be a significant undertaking on the part of state government and one that will require a shared vision on the part of the executive branch, the legislative branch, and the stakeholders who have dedicated their lives and careers serving and educating our children and youth. The opportunity is that with a single agency with a highly focused mission, we will finally have the chance to achieve the kind of transformational change that can, and I am confident will, eventually stabilize our child care workforce and result in the more efficient and effective provision of services to those who require it. We wholeheartedly embrace this proposal and urge each of you

to do the same as we work toward the goal that I know we all share, which is to make Ohio the best place in the nation to live, work, and raise a family.

### **Critical Occupation Scholarships**

Governor DeWine has also proposed scholarships to pay for child care for individuals working in “critical occupations” – including child care workers who earn between 161-200% of the Federal Poverty Level. Ohio AEYC supports this targeted investment to support educators, increase access to child care, and address the workforce needs of the state.

We know that child care programs are contending with massive and unprecedented staffing shortages, leading to long waiting lists for families in need of child care.

With the investment in these scholarships, Ohio has a unique opportunity to address not one but three interrelated issues: bolstering child care programs with much-needed resources, supporting early childhood educators who are parents themselves and creating more accessible childcare options so businesses can have greater success on their road to economic recovery.

### **Benefits to Child Care Programs**

- Supports recruitment and retention of educators.
- Increases revenue for programs who previously offered free or discounted tuition for staff.

### **Benefits for Educator/Parents:**

- Allows educators who were paying for child care expenses out of pocket to earn more take-home pay to help afford other family expenses.
- Provides qualified educators the opportunity to accept job promotions without jeopardizing public benefits their family receives.

### **Benefits for Ohio Business Community:**

- Keeps more classrooms and programs open for the new and existing businesses whose workers need child care options.
- Incentivizes child care programs to accept PFCC payments to remain competitive - resulting in increasing child care access for working families.

Finally, while this is one strategy to address the child care workforce crisis, we know that there is a deep need for increased investment to address educator compensation which cannot come on the backs of families or early childhood educators themselves, whose poverty-level wages have subsidized the system for far too long.

We call on the Governor, the Legislature and state agencies to prioritize and develop long-term sustainable solutions to address early childhood educator compensation.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. We are happy to be utilized as a resource and to connect you directly to early childhood educators and families in your district who stand ready to share first-hand experiences with you related to this testimony.