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Testimony Of Michelle Bieber, President of the Ohio Association of Child Care Providers (OACCP) and Owner/Operator of Over the Rainbow childcare centers in Toledo, Ohio

Ohio House Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education
Proponent of HB 33 provisions relating to publicly funded childcare

Chair Richardson, Ranking Member Isaacsohn, and members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education: My name is Michelle Bieber and I am the owner and operator of the Over the Rainbow child care centers in Toledo. I am here today as the current President of the Ohio Association of Child Care Providers (OACCP). OACCP represents Directors and Business Owners of over 600 licensed child care centers. Our members educate and care for over 50,000 of Ohio's youngest children, including private pay and publicly funded children, who are served in faith based, for-profit and non-profit programs.

I am here today to convey our support for the childcare provisions in the HB 33, especially the creation of the new Department of Children and Youth. By centralizing programs that serve children, we on the front lines of childcare believe having one department will have stream-lined and more transparent policies that are aligned.

You may recall in the last budget bill, the Publicly Funded Child Care and Step Up to Quality Study Committee was created. In the committee's final report issued in December 2022, the top findings of the committee included:

- Workforce Shortages and Trends
- Increases in the Cost of Doing Business
- Costs and Workforce Impact on Access
- Reducing Administrative Burdens and Increasing Business Supports
- Lack of Data and Resource Coordination
- Long-Term Funding Sustainability

The PFCC/SUTQ Study Committee brought forward the following nine (9) recommendations:

1. Complete a thorough review of all existing SUTQ standards to identify areas of improvement and make changes to enhance child outcomes, while removing unnecessary administrative barriers to system participants. ODJFS and ODE should continue to reduce administrative burdens and enhance/streamline efficiencies to attract and retain a strong sector of quality early learning and child care providers.
2. Create an exemption for Family Child Care Home providers enrolling a low number of children receiving PFCC from being required to be rated under SUTQ.
3. ODJFS should use data, including national best practices, and market research and conditions, to explore different payment structures for PFCC – starting with paying on enrollment rather than attendance. Additional payment structures to explore could include paying based on a weekly minimum attendance of 1 – 2 days/week; paying a split rate that includes a base for enrollment and hourly for attendance; and changing payment type categories.
4. Provide optional shared services and business development resources based on feedback of child care providers to assist them in creating a sustainable business, leveraging, and utilizing existing state and local business and entrepreneurial supports.

5. Urgent action is needed to increase professionals entering the field, not only to fill the available PFCC slots, but to enable all families to access quality, affordable child care. **Address the early care and education workforce crisis** through a comprehensive strategy involving Ohio Departments of Development, Higher Education, local colleges and universities, and high schools to build pathways with a pipeline to fill critical jobs.
6. **Identify and develop business strategies** specifically designed to address identified areas of **greatest need** where the demand for child care **outpaces the supply** and, in general, consider more provider incentives and supports to help providers remain, re-enter, or enter the field. Continue to engage the business community and others in local partnerships to support and expand child care programs in underserved areas.
7. Continue to **engage the business community and others in local partnerships** to support and expand child care programs, particularly in underserved areas.
8. Move Ohio forward in the state's ability to make data-driven policy decisions impacting early childhood needs, learning, programs and supports. This starts with the inclusion of early childhood information into the Innovate Ohio Platform so that data can be accessible to the public and policy makers to inform policy decisions. **A fully integrated data system** which crosses systems and programs between social service, developmental disabilities, health, and education agencies will equip stakeholders with the information needed to make systemic improvements and to address targeted early childhood needs.
9. Continued focus will be needed on improving access, increasing workforce participation and sustainability over time. ODJFS and ODE should continue to model and share long-term financial projections on anticipated revenue and expenditures for the state's child care system, with **consideration toward ensuring reimbursements cover providers' costs of doing business**, while continuing to incentivize providers reaching a higher quality rating.

Ohio's childcare programs are the workforce behind the workforce. Additionally, we know that quality early learning provided in these programs prepares our children to be

successful in school. Thank you for your time and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.