



children's defense fund ohio

House Economic and Workforce Development Committee

H.B. 1 - Opponent Testimony

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Chair Swearingen, Vice Chair Santucci, Ranking Member Upchurch and members of the House Economic and Workforce Development Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today in opposition to HB 1.

My name is Kim Eckhart and I serve as the Interim Director for the Children's Defense Fund-Ohio. Born out of the civil rights movement, with more than four decades of advocacy behind us, it is the mission of the Children's Defense Fund to champion policies and programs that lift children out of poverty, protect them from abuse and neglect, and ensure their access to appropriate and targeted health care, quality education, and nutritional wellness. We recognize that every child contributes to the vibrancy and success of our communities and are therefore driven to ensure every child and young person has opportunities to gain the social, economic, cultural and political capital they need to flourish into adulthood and give back to their communities.

Every two years, lawmakers have the important opportunity to invest in children and their future through the budget process. The budget is a moral document that is a reflection of our priorities as a state, and we must do right by our children and youth – the future of Ohio. We must ensure our budget invests in and protects essential programs all children need to live in dignity.

As a member of the Ohio Children's Budget Coalition, a statewide group of 22 advocacy organizations committed to supporting the holistic needs of every child, we co-authored our [Biennial Budget Issue Book: Creating a Vision for Child-wellbeing for Ohio](#), which outlines 15 critical opportunities to improve child well-being in the budget. In addition to the priorities outlined in this document, I have personally witnessed dozens of organizations testify during the budget process about critical investments in the lives of not only our children but people who are elderly and people with disabilities. I have been humbled by the number of people that visit the statehouse to describe personal stories along with data and research to make a compelling case for the role of using tax dollars to support valuable services.

The bottom line is that the flat tax proposal would reduce the amount of resources available for services for children by an estimated \$2 billion annually, according to the [Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy \(ITEP\)](#). As an organization, we oppose this bill because it would impact Ohio's ability to invest in children for years to come.

Many proponents of this bill claim this will save money for the middle class, but the reality of this bill tells a very different story. Instead, it would provide limited tax savings ([as low as \\$3.00 or even less for some](#)) to working and middle class families and deprive them of the essential and critical services that they depend upon or could benefit from. If we really want to make a difference for middle and working class Ohioans, lawmakers should support a state Thriving Families Tax Credit or High Quality Child Care, [two of several proposals outlined in our budget book](#), along with the others listed below:

- School Based Healthcare
- Ending Homelessness
- Paid Family Leave
- Foster Care Scholarships
- Educator Shortage
- Fair School Funding
- Food Hardship
- Hunger-Free Schools
- State Thriving Families Tax Credit
- High Quality Child Care
- Child Lead Poisoning
- Children Services
- Strengthening Ohio Medicaid
- Youth Incarceration
- “Hoteling” Displacement in Foster Care

All of the budget recommendations highlighted in this document could be fully funded if Ohio strategically invested in children and families. I urge you to support parents, families, and whole child wellbeing by opposing HB1, for the future of our children and the future of Ohio.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony today. Thank you.