

Chairman Huffman, Vice Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate Health Committee, my name is Tamara Lunan and I'm the Care Economy Organizing Director at the Ohio Organizing Collaborative leading the CEO Project. **The Care Economy Organizing Project** organizes Early Childhood Educators, Parents, and teachers to take collective action on issues impacting the Care Economy in Ohio. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on House Bill 33, on behalf of our base.

Families all across Ohio continue to be in crisis, exacerbated by the pandemic. Families need more support, not cuts. We are asking that you support the following Policy efforts. We know from our base that these supports will help more Ohioans live with dignity as they endeavor to get on a pathway to thriving.

**Expand health care coverage to pregnant women and children in Ohio.** H.B. 33 would provide more health coverage for children and pregnant women by increasing eligibility for Medicaid up to 300% of federal poverty level (a family of three with income just over \$74,580 annually). The House also added continuous Medicaid enrollment, which would ensure Ohio kids get the health care they need from birth to age three. This will provide families with health coverage for labor, birth, and postpartum care as well as doctor visits for the first three years of their child's life without the stress of incurring major costs for critical health care services.

We're grateful that your colleagues in the House included an amendment to establish a five-year program in Medicaid to cover doula services. Research indicates that having a doula present during pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum can provide many benefits for women and their babies, including reduced rates of medical interventions, shorter labor, increased satisfaction with the birth experience, improved health outcomes for the mother and the baby, and better breastfeeding outcome. Black women routinely die giving birth more than any other demographic. Let's ensure that all Birthing Ohioans have the ability to make it home to care for their babies and families.

**Prepare more kids for kindergarten and help parents stay in the workforce.** H.B. 33 will help an estimated 15,000 children get the child care they need by expanding eligibility for publicly funded child care to more working parents. While we support this measure we know that more families would benefit from an increase to 200% of the Federal Poverty level. Ohio even at the proposed 160% would still have some of the lowest eligibility rates in the nation. This contradicts the story that Ohio is the best place to raise a family. Too often families are losing their childcare or being outright denied publicly funded child care because they fall off the cliff and get a raise. We penalize Ohio's working families by not increasing these rates so that they are able to stay in the workforce.

The House budget expands on Gov. DeWine's proposed budget by including new investment in early childhood education. An additional 15,550 3- and 4-year-old children in families with low incomes will have an opportunity to get high-quality early childhood education programming. High-quality early care and education gives children a strong start and improves their long-term health and economic opportunities.

**Boost the economic security of children and families.** A Thriving Families Tax Credit would help nearly 986,000 families and 1.8 million children with an average tax refund of roughly \$1,000 a year. This tax credit would help more families pay for groceries and reduce hunger and insecurity. State lawmakers can amend H.B. 33 to include the Thriving Families Tax Credit.

**Boost the financial security of Ohio workers.** Adding a 10% refundable option to Ohio's Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) would put more money back in the pockets of workers who are paid low wages.

State lawmakers can rewrite the tax code to help stabilize families, give children more opportunities for a better life, and build a more equitable Ohio.

We respectfully ask that you support these measures. Ohio can be the best place to raise a family if we invest in our families on the front end.