



Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee
Ohio Association of Goodwill Industries
Written Proponent Testimony
November 13, 2024

Chairman Cirino, Vice Chair Reineke, and members of the Senate Committee on Workforce and Higher Education:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on Senate Bill 273, the Child Care Credit Program. My name is Prince Garuba, and I am the Executive Director of the Ohio Association of Goodwill Industries. We are the state association representing 15 Goodwill organizations across Ohio. Many of you may know Goodwill for our retail stores, but what is often overlooked is Goodwill's core mission: providing opportunities for all through the power of work. Each time someone donates to Goodwill or shops in one of our retail stores, they directly fund workforce development programs at that respective Goodwill. At Goodwill, we serve various populations by helping them find employment, whether they are part of the reentry population, homeless veterans, or, most significantly, individuals with developmental disabilities.

Eliminating barriers to employment is integral to our mission. We often say that Goodwill was one of the first community-based, workforce-centered organizations to emerge in our nation, meeting the needs of disadvantaged individuals. Ohio Goodwills have consistently demonstrated this commitment over the years. A notable example is our Goodwill of South Central Ohio member. In the fall of 2023, Goodwill of South Central Ohio became the first Goodwill in the state to open a childcare center and only the fourth Goodwill to do so in the Midwest. This center addresses a critical need in Ross County and the broader Appalachian region, which is classified as a childcare desert where access to childcare facilities is significantly limited. The demand for more centers in this area was and remains urgent.

As a workforce-centered community organization, Goodwill of South Central Ohio, led by President and CEO Marvin Jones, has identified affordability as the primary challenge for residents seeking daycare services. In Ohio, the average cost of full-time childcare for an infant



is around \$10,009 per year, accounting for nearly 15% of the median household income in the state. For a single parent, that percentage can exceed 30%, placing a significant burden on working families. This expense is especially challenging in areas like Ross County, where many families are already struggling to make ends meet.

Statistics show that lack of access to affordable childcare is a major barrier to workforce participation. According to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, 60% of parents report missing work due to childcare issues, and 20% say they have had to leave or change jobs for the same reason. Senate Bill 273 does something that many believe is long overdue- it creates a public-private partnership between employers and the state of Ohio in an effort to reduce the cost of childcare.

At Goodwill, we have a unique viewpoint: we are part of the business community while also helping other employers find workers as a workforce development provider, and with the opening of a childcare center by one of our members, we are also a childcare provider. We understand the urgency of making childcare affordable for all and the positive effect it can have on the economy, as well as the potential negative effect if left unaddressed.

A report by the Council for a Strong America estimates that inadequate access to childcare costs the U.S. economy \$57 billion annually in lost earnings, productivity, and revenue. The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services estimates that Ohio businesses lose approximately \$3 billion each year due to childcare-related absenteeism and employee turnover. A survey by Ready Nation found that 86% of primary caregivers said problems with childcare hurt their efforts or time commitment at work.

By supporting Senate Bill 273, Ohio can take a significant step toward alleviating these challenges. Investing in affordable childcare not only supports working families but also strengthens the workforce and stimulates economic growth. Thank you for your time and consideration. If you have any questions or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me at Ogaruba@goodwillohio.com or 614-583-0319.