

Constance L. Johnson

Small Wonders In-Home Childcare LLC

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Testimony on House Bill 96

Chair White, Vice Chair Salvo, Ranking Member Lett, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on HB 96. My name is Constance Johnson, and I manage a family childcare program (FCC) under the CEO Project. I respectfully request your support for Ohio's children, families, and childcare providers by incorporating the childcare improvements outlined in Governor DeWine's executive budget. Specifically, these improvements include raising eligibility for childcare assistance for parents, investing in childcare as the workforce behind the workforce, and funding federally required changes to copay caps and reimbursing based on enrollment.

I have been a licensed FCC provider since July 25, 1995, in Euclid, a suburb of Cleveland, Ohio. Over my 30-year tenure as a small business owner in the childcare sector, I have supported numerous families within my program. I have assisted families experiencing homelessness, food insecurity, and difficulties in meeting their children's basic needs. For instance, I once found a mother asleep in my driveway due to exhaustion after working multiple shifts to pay her bills and provide for her family. Additionally, I have encountered mothers unable to afford their childcare co-pay, compelling them to keep their children at home or with relatives. No parent should have to choose between paying for childcare and meeting the basic necessities such as feeding their children or purchasing diapers.

Receiving payment based on enrollment rather than attendance would ensure that I can consistently provide high-quality care without needing to choose between covering business expenses (mortgage, utilities, insurance) and purchasing educational materials (books, crafts, experiments, learning items) for the children enrolled in my Gold-rated program. I have maintained a Step Up To Quality rating since its inception in 2014, and upholding this standard of excellence is crucial to me.

Many preschoolers at my facility experience professional childcare for the first time. Previously, they were often left with grandparents, family members, or friends due to financial constraints preventing access to professional childcare. These children frequently arrive with delays in social skills, speech development, and self-control. Raising the eligibility limit for childcare assistance would significantly benefit these families.

Without adequate state support, I fear that such challenging situations will become more prevalent. It is imperative to provide continued support to ensure the wellbeing of our children and families.

Thank you again for the opportunity to offer written testimony on this important matter. I am available to address any questions you may have.

Respectfully submitted,

Constance L. Johnson