

Proponent Testimony, HB 96
Jim Spurlino, CEO, Spurlino Materials, and Managing Director, Benchmark Materials
House Children and Human Services Committee
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Chair White, Vice Chair Salvo, Ranking Member Letter and members of the House Children and Human Services Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of the Governor's proposal for expansion of home visitation services in Ohio. My name is Jim Spurlino. I am the CEO of Spurlino Materials and Managing Director of Benchmark Materials.

I am a lifelong resident of the State of Ohio and have had the good fortune to invest in businesses and employ hundreds here in our great state. I am fully supportive of expanding home visitation to serve more families as outlined in the Governor's budget for several reasons.

As a businessman, I have rarely seen the Return on Investment that home visitation offers for a comparably small investment of public dollars. This is well-documented by many sources including the National Academy for State Health Policy (NSHP), Dr. James Heckman, Nobel laureate and economist from the University of Chicago, and many others. This return is estimated by NSHP is \$1.80 to \$5.70 for every dollar invested. Put another way by Heckman, he calculates a 13% ROI. Compare that to U.S. Treasuries return of less than 5% in the last 20 years or even the S&P 500, which is historically below 10%.

The ROI alone was enough to get my attention over 20 years ago when I first was introduced to home visitation. Since then, I've also learned much more about the science and outcomes. Dr. Jennifer Frey of Every Child Succeeds provides excellent testimony on this elsewhere but from my perspective, there are some basic positives to take away that clearly point to the impact of investing early with home visitation. And, almost every impact has the same characteristics of better outcomes that carryover for decades and lower costs of dealing with problems from not intervening early.

What does that look like? Improved health, children development, and family stability all mean savings down the road by NOT having to address problems when they are much more difficult to deal with and way more costly. Prevention and early intervention will always result in saving future public dollars and a healthier, more productive population.

At work, I don't fool myself into believing that my manufacturing plants can produce substandard products day-after-day and it will be cost-effective to remediate after production. That is far more expensive than figuring out the root cause and fixing at the beginning of the manufacturing process.

To me, that is analogous to our children. If we aspire to have a healthier and more productive class of new 18-year-old adults each year, then we need to invest early.

Besides being convinced that home visitation's early intervention sets children on the right trajectory for life, I am competitive when it comes to my home state. Here in Ohio, we are proud of our recent economic development victories and look for them to provide an ROI for years to come. This will only come with a productive workforce. Investing in our future includes investing in our workforce of the future.

Our neighboring states, our competitors to some degree, have figured this out to a greater degree than we have. According to the Prenatal-To-Three Policy Impact Center, Ohio ranks 25th in the nation of percentage of eligible children under the age of three served by home visitation. Our neighbors, Kentucky, Indiana, and Michigan, all rank higher. In fact, Indiana ranks 5th and Michigan ranks 6th, both with almost double the percentage. The Governor's proposal will be a good start on catching up although by increasing the number of children served by 30%, we still have more to do. Cutting funding by any amount to home visitation would be a grievous error.

This is not a political matter nor are issues like funding home visitation "owned" by either party. Many states and even the federal government have recognized the value of investing early. My advocacy efforts on such issues have spanned 20 years but have always been bipartisan and often led by fiscal conservatives. The same people that want to save money know that investing smartly is often the key.

The last time I was at the White House was in President Trump's first term. The invitation was a surprise and it was for a small summit. There were several U.S. Senators invited to speak before the President. Then, the President opened with this remark: "Strong American families make brighter futures for every American citizen." The summit was about investing in children early.

Fiscal conservatives like me know that sound investments, with proven returns, mean a prosperous state of Ohio. I urge that funding for home visitation remain as proposed in the Governor's budget and that our legislators remain vigilant in the support and protection of Ohio's citizens.