

Written Testimony of Chris Angellatta, Ph.D.  
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Before The Ohio Legislature - 136<sup>th</sup> General Assembly  
House Committee on Children and Human Services

Testimony on: House Bill 96 “Make state operating appropriations for FY 2026-27”  
Thursday February 27, 2025  
Room 116, The Ohio Statehouse

Chair White, Vice Chair Salvo, Ranking Member Lett and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the Ohio Child Care Resource and Referral Association members and board regarding House Bill 96. We provide technical assistance to child care providers, conduct training and professional development programs, and coordinate statewide initiatives. Together, we represent the statewide network of resource and referral organizations serving all 88 counties in Ohio.

House Bill 96 would make positive investments for the child care industry, and we suggest additional measures to be included. The child care industry is a critical component of the economic infrastructure in Ohio. Child care is the industry that enables all other work.

- HB 96 proposes (in FY27) parity of publicly funded child care payments by moving to payment on enrollment instead of attendance for all providers. This measure recognizes the fixed costs in providing child care and **supports private business owners** similar to school system providers. We fully support this measure if appropriate fraud prevention accountability methods are included. However, current permanent law Presumptive Eligibility language in HB 96 is deleted. We understand it would not be needed once payment moves to prospective on enrollment. However, the language deletion would be effective in July 2025 which is 15 months ahead of the prospective payment implementation. We would prefer to keep the deleted language, or move it to temporary law, if necessary, with an effective date saying, “effective until DCY implements a different payment methodology.” We support everything you are doing but know that there are opposing ideologies that may not see this policy progressing forward. We would prefer to retain the concept in statute to avoid confusion.

- HB 96 would be strengthened by including a measure to rebuild and retain the child care workforce. **The challenges with access to child care hinges on addressing the child care staffing shortage** during a time of job market competition and increased cost of living. We support creating free child care for all child care workers regardless of income eligibility, similar to Kentucky and Michigan. This would attract workers who want to work but have young children. This could be conducted as a pilot program and supported through a voucher system.
- HB 96 can help ensure compliance for nationally accredited programs in the same way HB 7, passed in 2024, provided an alternative pathway for a corresponding step up to quality rating. NAEYC and Head Start accreditations are now able to be recognized as alternative pathways for Step up to Quality, recognizing other research-based nationally recognized accreditations that are substantially equivalent rating should be considered as well. We respectfully ask the following accreditations to be added: NECPA and Cognia. Other accreditations to be considered include NAFCC, NACCP, COA. **This would significantly reduce the administrative burden for nationally accredited programs.**
- HB 96 could specifically include child care providers in statute as required members of the statutory Early Childhood Advisory Committee (ECAC). The removal of Child Care Advisory Committee happened during a lame duck session. The revamped ECAC needs the voice of front-line providers for policy discussions to ensure decisions are practical and implementable.  
We support the change to ECAC but would like to return the provider participation to the statute. **We believe that while there are many stakeholders in the process, the providers are the ones that must implement new policy.** We would like to have the Ohio Association of Child Care Providers select a center provider from an urban community, a center provider from a rural community and a family child care provider.
- Lastly, we desperately seek an appeals process for providers, the sooner the better. Inspections across the state vary in terms of severity, sometimes resulting in onerous and unfounded violations and **the provider has little recourse.** We need a system where the provider can defend themselves if they believe the violations are unfounded or negotiate agreed upon next steps. A formal appeal process could enhance the licensing and quality process by involving experienced professionals who thoroughly assess a facility's safety measures, curriculum, staff qualifications, and overall quality of care provided.