



Gloria Blevins
Black Child Development Institute - Ohio

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Ohio House Children and Human Services Committee

Chairperson White, Vice Chair Salvo, Ranking Member Lett, and Members of the Child and Human Services Committee:

My name is Gloria Blevins, and I am the President & Executive Director of Black Child Development Institute – Ohio. I am submitting this testimony in strong support of the essential investments outlined in Ohio’s FY2026-27 state budget, House Bill 96 that prioritize early childhood, child care, publicly funded child care (PFCC), and maternal health. These areas are critical for the well-being of families in Ohio, and the proposed changes will help build a more supportive and sustainable system for families.

The provisions related to early childhood services in HB 96 represent a crucial investment in Ohio's youngest residents. Ensuring that all children have access to high-quality early learning opportunities that can help set them on a path to success in school and life.

- **Support quality early learning experiences that prepare children for Kindergarten.**
The proposed measures will help support early childhood education programs and increase accessibility to critical resources. Expanding access to affordable early childhood education programs helps ensure that every child can have a strong foundation.
- **Tax Credits for Families with Young Children:**
The refundable child tax credit for families with children six years and younger is a key financial support which will assist families during the early years of a child’s life. This tax credit will further create the ability for families to gain essential resources, including early childhood education programs, ultimately improving the health and well-being of children.

Affordable and accessible child care has proven to be a fundamental need for working families. The provisions regarding child care and PFCC in HB 96 address key barriers to access, especially for low- and moderate-income families who struggle to find affordable, quality care for their children.

- **Expanding Access to Child Care:**
The proposal to expand eligibility for publicly funded child care (PFCC) to families with incomes up to 200% of the federal poverty line will help more families access essential care for their children. By increasing access to, HB 96 allows children in working families to benefit from high-quality child care programs which supports the child’s

overall growth and development, while also providing parents the opportunity to work and contribute to Ohio's economy.

- **Stability for Child Care Providers:**

In addition to expanding access to PFCC, HB 96 provides necessary support for child care providers who are the backbone of Ohio's early childhood education system. These investments in child care providers will help improve the quality of care available to children, while also ensuring that providers can maintain stable and sustainable operations. By addressing the workforce challenges facing child care providers, Ohio will be better equipped to ensure that more children have access to nurturing environments.

Noting Ohio has one of the highest infant mortality rates in the country, the maternal health provisions in HB 96 are vital for improving the health and well-being of mothers and infants. Improving maternal health outcomes has lasting effects on the entire family, including better health for children and families, reduced health disparities, and improved long-term societal outcomes.

- **Expanding Home Visiting and Family Support Programs:**

The expansion of home visiting services, such as Family Connects, is an essential step in ensuring that mothers have access to early, comprehensive support after childbirth. In-home visits provide, vital health assessments, education on infant care, and emotional support during a critical time in a mother's life.

- **Support for Lead Abatement:**

Ohio is ranked second in the country for children with lead elevated blood levels. The proposal to increase the tax credit for lead abatement directly benefits child's growth and development coupled with maternal and child health. Lead exposure during pregnancy and early childhood years is a serious risk contributing to significant developmental delays and health complications. This increase will help reduce harmful environmental risks, ensuring that pregnant women and children are better protected from lead exposure, which interconnects with contributing to sustaining infant vitality.

Ohio HB 96 represents a comprehensive and thoughtful approach to addressing some of the most critical needs of families in Ohio. We strongly encourage the Committee to support these vital provisions in HB 96 and work toward the swift passage of this bill. The children and families of Ohio deserve the opportunity to thrive, and this legislation represents an important step toward making that a reality.

Thank you for your time and commitment to Ohio's children and families.

Sincerely,



Gloria Blevins
President & Executive Director