

Yolanda Brown  
8475 Gracies Trail  
Reynoldsburg Oh  
43068  
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Chair White, Vice Chair Salvo, Ranking Member Lett, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today on House Bill 96. My name is Yolanda Brown and I run Yolanda's Playhouse and Learning Center Childcare in Vandalia Ohio and I represent the CEO Project. I am here in support of House Bill 96 and the positive impacts it will have on childcare centers like me and the families I serve. The executive budget's 7% cap and moving to enrollment versus attendance will help the families I serve and help me as a business owner. As a business we still assume the cost regardless if a family attends that day of childcare which is why enrollment is so important to us.

I have been in business for over 19 years. At the age of 13 I started babysitting and over the next 10 years I not only became a successful businesswoman but a leader in childcare services in my community. But it did not come easy. My son was found to be born with a partially collapsed lung and had been hospitalized nearly twenty times, his life was in danger. I had to find ways to keep the daycare business going. with the heavy financial burden and stress it caused on my marriage , the experience became my “why”.

For almost 16 years Yolanda’ Playhaus Learning Center has provided services for children in the Vandalia and surrounding communities and we currently hold a Gold star rating. We strive not only for excellence in service but we also hire experienced and culturally diverse staff. Which I believe is important in today’s world.

I am also a foster parent and have been fostering children for over 20 years. I serve infants through 5 years of age and have shouldered the burden of childcare cost the entire time. The per diem, per day dollar amount that is given to foster parents barely covers the cost of clothing, food and travel to doctors’ appointments and other necessary activities but definitely does NOT cover the cost of childcare.

I can recall my phone ringing at 1:00am. It was a caseworker with a family of 4 all of the children were under the age of five needing to be placed, I without hesitation took the family in. If I did not own a childcare facility . I may not have been able to accept this family. Most times children arrive with just the clothing on their backs. As a foster parent you have to find care for the children to attend so that you can go to work. Very few centers have drop in care, not to mention the child barely has the necessary paperwork that’s mandatory for them to start care. The placement was for nearly 7 months until they were reunited with their 18 year old cousin. With the cost of childcare I could not afford to have placed them in care. so I ate all of the cost

As a childcare provider I understand first-hand the cost associated with childcare and also understand what is at stake for foster children which is why I am asking for you to amend House Bill 96 and include free childcare for foster children and kinship care.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony today. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.