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2-27-2025

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 Rochelle Bankhead, and I run Under the Sea Child Care Center, in Colerain Township, in Cincinnati. I also represent the CEO Project. I am here today in support of House Bill 96, specifically the childcare provisions that benefit Ohio children, families, and childcare providers.

I have been in business for over 26 years, and I am passionate about my work. I care deeply about the community, children and the joy that comes from seeing children happy and thriving. My mission is to provide a space where children can learn, grow and prepare for their future.

Recently, I took in a 13 year old foster child who had a 3 day-old baby. When I asked the county about childcare, they assured me they would handle everything. However, I later found that the money I received to care for the 13-year old child did not cover the cost of both the children. I spent \$15,000 on childcare, which I've yet to be reimbursed for, despite the county's initial promises. I also have attached email correspondences.

This situation is unsustainable, and it highlights a larger issue: children in foster care and kinship care should receive free childcare, regardless of the foster parent's income. In my case, my income exceeded the guidelines, which meant I didn't qualify for any childcare vouchers, despite my significant out-of-pocket expenses.

The executive budget's proposal to implement a 7% cap and shifting to an enrollment-based system, rather than one based on attendance, will provide significant support to the families I serve and will also benefit me as a business owner.

One thing I'd like to see in this budget is a provision for people like me who foster children to receive free childcare. I've been providing foster care for the past seven years, and every time the county contacts me about a new placement, I immediately ask about childcare. Unfortunately, the cost of childcare for foster children is too high for many Ohioans to afford the high cost of childcare.

I urge you to support the inclusion of free childcare for foster and kinship care families in this budget. It is vital to ensure that foster children are not deprived of the care they need simply because their caregiver cannot afford the high cost of childcare.

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