

Zandra Phillips, Pitter Patter Learning Center
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Chair White, Vice Chair Salvo, Ranking Member Lett, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 96. My name is Zandra Phillips, and I am the owner of Pitter Patter Learning Center in Dayton, Ohio, District 39. I also represent the CEO Project. I am here today to urge your support for Ohio's children, families, and childcare providers by adopting the childcare improvements included in Governor DeWine's executive budget. These measures raising eligibility for childcare assistance, investing in childcare as the workforce behind the workforce, and implementing federally required changes to copay caps and enrollment-based reimbursement are essential for the stability and success of both families and providers.

As a childcare provider in Montgomery County and a business owner for 12 years, I have witnessed firsthand the life-changing impact of accessible, high-quality childcare. My center has served 203 children from 115 families, many of whom rely on childcare assistance to remain in the workforce. Unfortunately, the current eligibility thresholds create impossible choices for hardworking parents. One mother at my center was offered a promotion that would have provided her family with much-needed financial stability. However, she had to turn it down because it would push her just over the income limit for assistance. Without childcare support, she couldn't afford care and risked losing her job entirely. No parent should have to choose between career advancement and their child's care.

Childcare providers also face significant challenges due to inadequate reimbursement policies. Currently, providers are paid based on attendance rather than enrollment, meaning that if a child is absent due to illness or a parent's fluctuating work schedule, we lose funding—even though our operational costs remain unchanged. This financial instability makes it incredibly difficult to offer competitive wages and retain qualified staff. By investing in childcare as the workforce behind the workforce, Ohio can strengthen its economy by ensuring parents can work while their children receive the care and education they deserve.

I strongly urge you to support the childcare improvements in Governor DeWine's executive budget: raising eligibility for assistance, strengthening investments in the childcare workforce, and implementing federally required updates to copay caps and enrollment-based reimbursement. These changes are critical to ensuring families can access affordable, high-quality childcare and that providers like myself can continue serving our communities.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I welcome any questions you may have.

Respectfully,

Zandra Phillips
Childcare Owner
CEO Community Organizer Dayton Core Team