

March 4, 2025

**RE: KinderCare: Letter of Support Child Care Budget Priorities FY 2026-27**

Chair White, Vice Chair Salvo, Ranking Member Lett, and members of the House Children & Human Services Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on House Bill 96, the state's operating budget bill.

On behalf of KinderCare Learning Companies (KinderCare), I am writing to express our appreciation for your leadership in early childhood education (ECE). Your actions will have lasting impacts on the lives of children, families, and regional economies across the great State of Ohio. We appreciate your support of high-quality ECE and your recognition of child care both an immediate workforce development strategy for working parents and an investment in tomorrow's future to ensure children enter K-12 kindergarten ready.

**KinderCare, representing our 95 high quality early learning centers and 44 before/after school Champions programs, serving nearly 12,000 children and employing over 2,000 teachers & staff, commends the child care investments in the FY 2026-27 budget.** At KinderCare, we are committed to serving children of backgrounds and means, and nearly 45% of the families we served rely on the Publicly Funded Child Care (PFCC) subsidy assistance program.

Specifically, KinderCare supports the following investments in child care programs:

- Continue the **Child Care Choice Voucher Program**, allowing families earning up to 200% of federal poverty line (FPL) to obtain access to affordable care through a voucher program. Extending this program is essential to ensure families have access to affordable, high-quality care of their choice based on the needs of their child and family's preference. Without action, thousands of Ohioan families will face incredible challenge of paying full price for care or leave the workforce all together. Continuing this program is essential for supporting families and Ohio's robust economy.
- **Pilot free child care for child care professionals.** Child care professionals are the workforce behind the workforce. While wage inflation has increased salaries of child care workers, increases in cost-of-living expenses and a competitive market for qualified employees make it challenging to attract and retain qualified teachers. To ease those challenges, we support creating free child care for child care workers, like Kentucky, Iowa, Indiana, among others have implemented. This will attract workers who want to work but have young children and cannot afford to pay for care and work. Piloting this approach is essential for support the ECE workforce through Ohio and recruit new ECE professionals to our field.
- **Implement a "Tri-Share" model to encourage employer participation in child care.** Public-private partnerships are needed to incentivize employer participation in child care. The Child Care Cred, as proposed under HB 2, will do just that by creating a grant program to offers employers funding to help offset their employees' child care expense. An investment of \$10 million is essential to ensure more employers help invest in child care benefits and increase access to affordable, quality care.



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Thank you for recognizing the importance of high quality ECE. Please consider KinderCare a committed partner to expanding access to quality, affordable ECE programs throughout Ohio. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at: [margot.gould@kindercare.com](mailto:margot.gould@kindercare.com).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Margot Grant Gould'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'Margot' being the most prominent.

Margot Grant Gould  
Sr. Manager, Government Relations  
KinderCare Learning Companies