

Katelyn Seitz

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Ohio House Children and Human Services Committee

Chairwoman White, Vice Chairwoman Salvo, Ranking Member Lett, and members of the House Children and Human Services Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of House Bill 7.

My name is Katelyn Seitz, and I am a licensed foster parent and full-time working parent in Columbus. I am here today to urge you to support granting categorical eligibility for publicly funded child care to foster and kinship families.

Some biological parents spend years saving and budgeting for childcare and have about 9 months to prepare for their new bundle of joy. I, as a foster parent, got a call at 2am and by 3am had picked up a precious 10 month old baby boy.

As my husband and I both work full time, we then alternated using our PTO to stay home with him while we scrambled to find childcare. We enrolled him in a childcare center that required \$634 deposit (which was actually low compared to some centers that required the full month payment as a deposit). We had not yet received any foster care per diem payments since those pay after the end of each month, so that deposit came out of our pocket. We were nervous to pay the deposit because it is never guaranteed how long a child is staying with you. He could have left our home the next week if relatives were found, which, while that could have been great for him, would have made us lose our deposit and the sting of that would also have made us more hesitant to take another placement.

After paying the deposit, we started paying \$1,375 per month for childcare *alone* while receiving \$790 per month for his per diem daily rate. "Great," I thought, "That leaves a difference of \$585 for us to still pay out of pocket for childcare each month... where is that supposed to come from? And wait, what about every other penny spent on the child for diapers, wipes, food, clothing, etc. Where is that now coming from?" The \$16,500 per year spent on childcare is basically a part time job, and that is just for one child! There is a substantial need for foster parents to take sibling sets, but with foster parents expected to pay for childcare, that is out of the question. This cost not only severely limited us to consider opening our home to other placements, but also has limited every prospective foster parent we've talked to who are working parents and would need childcare, from being able to open their homes to foster youth.

As a full-time pediatric speech-language pathologist and foster parent, I have been able to use my expertise to help early-identify developmental delays for my foster child and advocate for services. I've also been able to counsel countless foster parents on how to navigate special education, therapy services, etc. for their foster children. In my experience, due to foster parents being expected to foot the bill for childcare, foster care is most friendly to families with a stay-at-home parent. If House Bill 7 was passed, it would open up incredible new opportunities for more professionals such as therapists, counselors, teachers, behavioral specialists, medical

professionals, etc. to become foster parents. This would introduce a wealth of new opportunities for 1) more homes for foster youth and 2) more diversity of foster parent backgrounds/training.

It has been stressful enough to find quality child care so last minute, care for unique needs given trauma and developmental delays, be available for frequent doctor/therapist appointments, caseworker visits and weekly parent visitation, and deal with the constant uncertainties and ups and downs in the roller coaster ride that is foster care. Eliminating the added stress of paying \$16,500 per year per foster youth's child care is paramount to make foster care more sustainable in Ohio. We all pour out our heart, mind, and money to serve as foster parents. What a burden that would lift to take money out of that equation.

Thank you for your time and commitment to Ohio's children and families. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,  
Katelyn Seitz