

March 8, 2025

To House Children and Human Services Committee,

My family and I reside in Galena, Ohio. My husband and I became licensed foster parents about a year and a half ago because we felt compelled to help youth in our community who were unable to be cared for by their biological families. During our training process, we were surprised to learn that the state of Ohio does not provide foster parents with specific financial support for childcare for the foster children in their home. It seemed counterintuitive to ask Ohioans to take in vulnerable kids, yet not provide for child care for those children to enable the adults caring for them to remain employed. Most foster children's stipends barely cover basic needs such as food and clothing. There is absolutely not enough left (if anything at all) from the monthly stipend to pay child care expenses. Foster parents often pay for things like sports, music, and school expenses out of their own pockets in order to help the kids placed with them have well rounded childhoods. Caring for babies and young children in foster care who cannot attend school requires a stay at home or retired adult if one cannot afford child care. It isn't financially feasible for most families to pay for child care for foster youth in addition to biological children they already have in the home. So I would venture to say that the lack of state funded financial support for child care stops many people from becoming foster parents. Which is why there is an ongoing shortage of foster homes in Ohio.

My husband and I both work outside the home. We have three biological children and decided to only accept foster care placements of children who are in kindergarten or older due to the fact that there is no financial support for day care for foster children placed with us. However, even school age children need supervision before and after school depending on the parents' work schedules. The cost of before and aftercare through the YMCA Y Club program at our local elementary school is approximately \$4600 for the school year. This does not include child care for any holidays or inclement weather days that fall on weekdays where my husband and I still have to work; those days cost extra. The cost of YMCA summer day care or weekday camps for one school aged child during June through August is approximately \$2400. So our out of pocket cost for even a school aged child to have safe and consistent supervision outside of school so my husband and I can work is at least \$6000 annually. With some foster care stipends as low as \$20 per day (i.e. \$7300 annually) that leaves just \$1300 for the entire year to cover food, clothing and activities for a child, which is not even close to enough. It is well known that many foster youth have experienced significant trauma, causing them to have difficult emotional and behavioral issues. So not only are foster parents taking on the very difficult task of caring for, supporting and advocating for youth who can be extremely difficult to live with in their homes, but they are essentially being asked to pay out of

their own pockets to do so, and that out of pocket cost skyrockets when child care is needed.

Please support House Bill 7 to **grant foster and kinship caregivers eligibility for publicly funded child care**. This would ensure that the families who step up to care for some of Ohio's most vulnerable children have the resources they need to provide stability and support.

Thank you for your consideration.

Melissa and Matthew Muir