

To the Ohio House of Representatives,

I am a foster and adoptive mother for the past 11.5 years. My husband and I began our fostering journey licensed directly with Cuyahoga county children and family services. After 7 years we transferred to a private agency National Youth Advocacy Program where we have remained to current for wrap around support and to better meet the needs of the therapeutic level foster children placed in our home. While licensed with Cuyahoga there was a grant to help offset the cost of daycare, in switching to a private agency for more support for our foster children we no longer receive this grant. Currently the monthly per diem alone at our private agency does not fully cover the cost of daycare for a child 0-5 years old in foster care. The entire per diem goes to pay for daycare leaving the remaining financial burden for daycare on top of the cost of the rest of the formula for the month above what WIC helps with/diapers/baby wipes/food/extracurricular activities/basic living necessities. The financial burden of childcare for a ward of the state should not fall on the shoulders and pocketbooks of foster and kinship family's who do not meet eligibility for daycare assistance. My family's income and family size should not impact my foster children's need for a quality childcare. With the current economic hardships and rising daycare costs I know many foster family's who have closed their foster home or have been limited in only being able to provide homes for school age children because of being unable to personally pay above and beyond the monthly per diem just for childcare let alone be able to meet all the other additional basic needs of a child 0-5 years old financially out of our pockets. Even the cost of before/after school care has a heavy burden that should not fall onto foster and kinship family's. The number of children needing out of home placement is astronomical in Ohio especially in the 0-5 year old age range and these at risk children are worthy of quality structured and consistent care. Removing the income qualifications for childcare will have a significant impact in the number of available homes for our most vulnerable youth and will be one major barrier (amongst many foster and kinship face) that can be softened for foster and kinship family's so we can continue providing the best loving care for this future generation. Thank you for your consideration on this bill and may you unanimously vote in the best interest of our children and their foster and kinship family's.

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