

Adrienne Mehta
Current Foster Parent
3.10.25

Ohio House Children and Human Services Committee:

My name is Adrienne Mehta, and I am a foster caregiver from Columbus, Ohio. I am here today to urge you to prioritize critical investments in early childhood programs in Ohio's FY 2026-27 state budget, House Bill 7.

As someone who has been fostering for over 6 years, while working as a high school teacher, being categorically eligible for publicly funded child care regardless of income, would ensure we can continue to step up to care for some of Ohio's most vulnerable children. It has been one of our greatest accomplishments in life, to provide safety, love, and stability to young children, while their biological families work to provide a more stable home for their return.

This is very difficult to do without publicly funded childcare. We know of many other families that would be willing to become licensed foster parents, but do not have the resources to pay out of pocket for daycare.

We are very lucky that we have had some of our foster kids be able to take advantage of Early Head Start, however, this is rare. Childcare centers are less likely to take kids in foster care, unless they **also** qualify for Title 20. This is because daycares can "stack" EHS federal monies with Title 20. Foster parents are not permitted to pay the difference out of pocket, so are often excluded. This means that children in foster care can not access the federal program they need the most, because we do not qualify for publicly funded child care.

These policies will not only help children thrive but also boost Ohio's workforce and economy. I urge you to fully fund these initiatives to ensure every child gets the best start in life.

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

Sincerely,

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