



Gloria Blevins  
Black Child Development Institute - Ohio

March 8, 2025

Ohio House Children and Human Services Committee

Chairperson White, Vice Chair Salvo, Ranking Member Lett, and Members of the Children and Human Services Committee:

My name is Gloria Blevins, and I am the President & Executive Director of Black Child Development Institute – Ohio. I am submitting this testimony in strong support of the essential investments outlined in Ohio’s FY2026-27 state budget, House Bill 7. I am writing to express my strong support for Ohio House Bill 7, which would extend eligibility for publicly funded child care to foster and kinship caregivers. This legislation is a crucial step toward ensuring greater stability and support for children in the child welfare system, and I urge you to vote in favor of this bill.

As you know, foster and kinship caregivers play an essential role in providing safety, care, and stability to children who have been removed from their homes due to abuse, neglect, or other circumstances. However, many of these caregivers face significant financial challenges, particularly when it comes to balancing work, caregiving, and other responsibilities. By making foster and kinship caregivers eligible for publicly funded child care, we can help alleviate some of the financial burden they face, allowing them to better care for the children in their homes. Specifically, this bill will support:

#### **Stability for Children in Foster Care**

Children in the foster care system have already experienced significant trauma, and the stability of their living arrangements is critical to their well-being. When foster and kinship caregivers are better supported with access to affordable child care, they can maintain steady employment and continue to provide a stable, nurturing environment for the children in their care. This bill ensures that caregivers can meet the needs of their children without the added stress of juggling multiple responsibilities, which directly benefits the children’s emotional and developmental growth.

#### **Reducing Financial Barriers for Caregivers**

Many foster and kinship caregivers are already stretched thin financially. The cost of child care can be a significant burden, especially for families who are already facing the costs of raising children without a biological connection. By providing access to publicly funded child care, Ohio can reduce this financial strain, making it easier for caregivers to remain in the workforce and support their families, ultimately improving the overall quality of care that children receive.

### **Supporting Kinship Caregivers in Particular**

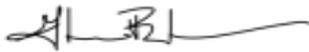
Kinship caregivers—who often step in to care for children when biological parents are unable to do so—may not receive the same financial or institutional support as traditional foster caregivers. This bill recognizes the unique role that kinship caregivers play in the child welfare system and helps ensure they are not left out of critical resources like child care assistance. Supporting these caregivers will help maintain familial connections for children, which is critical to their sense of identity and emotional well-being.

House Bill 7 will have a positive, long-term impact on Ohio's foster care system by improving the overall experience for both caregivers and children. By removing financial barriers and providing much-needed child care support, we are ensuring that more foster and kinship families can thrive. This increased support will help to reduce disruptions in placements, improve outcomes for children in foster care, and strengthen families throughout the state.

In conclusion, we strongly urge the committee to support House Bill 7. By making foster and kinship caregivers eligible for publicly funded child care, we are taking a critical step toward ensuring greater stability for children in the child welfare system. The children and families of Ohio deserve the opportunity to thrive, and this legislation represents an important step toward making that a reality.

Thank you for your time and commitment to Ohio's children and families.

Sincerely,



Gloria Blevins  
President & Executive Director