

**House Children and Human Services Committee
House Bill 41
Troy Hunter, Managing Director of Policy
Groundwork Ohio
March 18th, 2025**

Chairwoman White, Vice Chairwoman Salvo, Ranking Member Lett, and members of the House Children and Human Services Committee, my name is Troy Hunter, and I am the Managing Director of Policy at Groundwork Ohio.

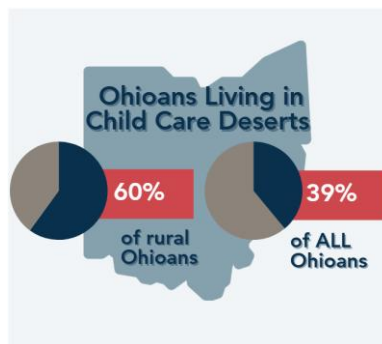
Groundwork Ohio is a statewide, nonpartisan public-policy research and advocacy organization that champions high-quality early learning and healthy development strategies from the prenatal period to age five, that lay a strong foundation for Ohio kids, families, and communities. Our vision is to make Ohio the best place to be a young child so that every child can reach their full potential.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 41, which would establish grant programs to support child care capacity expansion, learning labs, and employer-based child care initiatives. These investments would help in contributing to solutions that ensure Ohio families can access affordable, high-quality early care and education.

Child Care is Becoming Harder to Find and Afford

The child care sector is in crisis, with widespread staffing shortages and rising tuition costs creating significant barriers for families and employers.

- 58% of child care providers report staffing shortages that limit the number of available child care slots¹.
- 51% of providers have had to raise tuition to stay in business².
- 39% of all Ohioans, and 60% of rural Ohioans, live in a child care desert, where there are few or no licensed providers³.



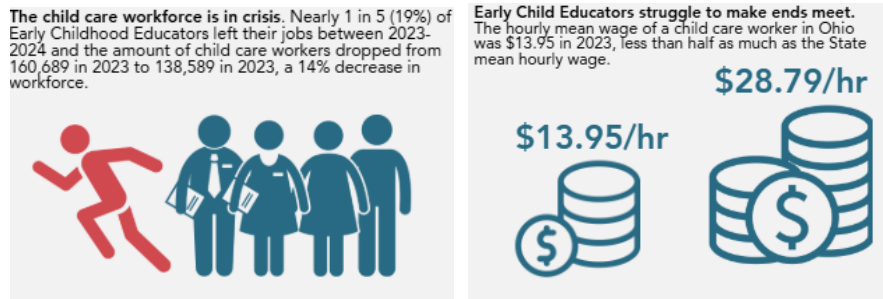
¹ National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), ECE Field Survey (2024)

² National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), ECE Field Survey (2024)

³ Center for American Progress, Child Care Deserts (2020)

Parents Can't Afford to Pay, and Educators Can't Afford to Stay

- Early childhood educators are leaving the workforce at alarming rates, with nearly 1 in 5 child care workers leaving their job between 2023 and 2024⁴.
- Child care workers earn an average hourly wage of \$14 or under⁵, less than half of Ohio's statewide mean wage, making it difficult to recruit and retain professionals.

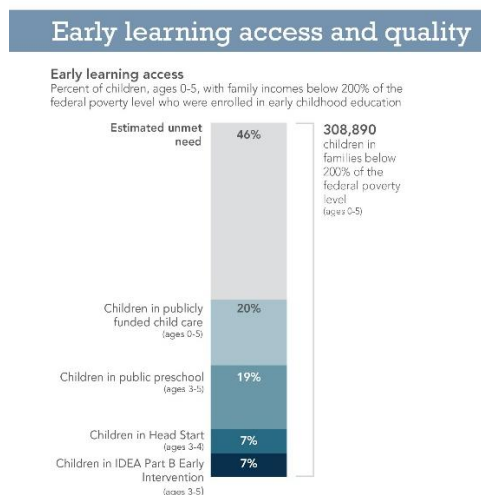


A recent poll of Ohio voters commissioned by Groundwork Ohio finds that⁶:

- 49% of parents with children under five struggle to find child care.
- 51% say the availability of high-quality, affordable child care has worsened in recent years.
- 73% say child care is too expensive.

Many Working Families Don't Have Access to Care

The impact is even greater for low-income working families, where over 308,000 children lack access to early care and education⁷. Even among families who qualify for publicly funded child care, enrollment remains low. In 2023, only 53.6% of eligible children under age five were enrolled in state early care and education programs. The demand far exceeds supply, and families are being left behind.



⁴ Ohio Child Care Resource and Referral Association, Workforce and Program Analysis Platform (2024)

⁵ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2023)

⁶ Ground Work Ohio Child Care Poll (2024)

⁷ Groundwork Ohio Early Childhood Dashboard (2025)

Public-Private Partnerships Can Help

If Ohio does not act, businesses will continue to struggle with recruitment and retention as working parents, particularly mothers, are forced to reduce their hours or leave the workforce altogether. Public-private partnerships can help reverse these trends by strengthening the child care system and allowing Ohio's workforce to grow.

House Bill 41 would provide targeted grant funding to expand child care availability, particularly in employer-based, community-based, and rural settings where shortages are most severe. By expanding child care infrastructure and incentivizing business investment, Ohio can support economic growth and give more families access to high-quality early learning.

At a time when Ohio businesses are struggling to hire and retain employees due to child care barriers, House Bill 41 contributes to solutions that will help stabilize the child care sector and ensure families can stay in the workforce.

I want to thank Representatives White and Roemer for their leadership in introducing this bill and urge the committee to advance House Bill 41 to help Ohio's families, businesses, and early childhood workforce.

Thank you for your time, and I am happy to answer any questions.