

## Action for Children



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Ohio House Children and Human Services Committee,

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

My name is Natalie Atkins, and I currently serve as the Director of Organizational Advancement at Action for Children, a Child Care Resource and Referral non-profit organization headquartered in Franklin County. Our organization serves seven counties in central Ohio which include: Delaware, Fairfield, Franklin, Licking, Madison, Pickaway and Union. Our mission is to transform the lives of children by supporting, empowering and advocating for the adults who make the biggest impact on children's lives: their parents, caregivers, and teachers. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 41, a piece of legislation that is crucial to strengthening Ohio's child care sector, supporting working families, and fostering economic growth through sustainable business partnerships.

Since 1972, Action for Children has worked to ensure that all children have access to quality early learning experiences. A key component of this work has been our role in the Ohio Child Care Business Partnership Grant through the Department of Children and Youth, an initiative that directly aligns with the objectives of HB 41. Through this grant, we have begun to facilitate partnerships between child care providers and businesses, in hopes to improving child care accessibility for working families while stabilizing the child care workforce.

The challenges facing Ohio's child care system are well-documented. Families across the state struggle to find affordable, high-quality child care, while businesses face increasing workforce shortages due to a lack of child care options for employees. A recent study indicated that child care barriers cost the U.S. economy billions of dollars annually due to absenteeism and employee turnover. In central Ohio, we see this impact daily, as families make difficult decisions between work and care for their children, and child care providers struggle with unsustainable business models due to low wages and high operating costs.

HB 41 addresses these challenges by formalizing partnerships between businesses and child care providers, creating innovative models to increase wages for child care professionals and reduce child care costs for working families. This approach mirrors the work we have begun in Franklin and Licking Counties through the Ohio Child Care Business Partnership Grant.

Through our experience, we have found that businesses are eager to participate in solutions that address child care challenges for their employees. Our conversations with businesses across Franklin and Licking counties have resulted in increased awareness of how offering child care benefits to employees deliver true ROI and a more engaged workforce. According to a 2023 study from Boston Consulting Group and Moms 1<sup>st</sup>, five major companies prioritizing child care benefits are already seeing up to 425% ROI.

The outcomes of our efforts have been overwhelmingly positive from both businesses and providers; however, we have seen challenges. We have recognized that the efforts of implementation take time; we are working within different budget cycles for companies and assessments for their workforce on the needs of child care support also takes time. HB 41

expands these proven strategies statewide, amplifying their impact which may help carry more “weight” in the importance of implementing benefits.

Action for Children firmly believes that strong public-private partnerships are key to solving Ohio’s child care crisis. HB 41 establishes a framework for sustainable investment in child care that benefits families, businesses, and Ohio’s economy as a whole. This legislation is not just a short-term fix—it is a strategic step toward a stronger, more resilient workforce and early education system.

We encourage policymakers to continue investment in initiatives that expand access to quality child care while supporting Ohio’s workforce.

On behalf of Action for Children, I thank the committee for your attention to this critical issue and urge your support for HB 41.

Respectfully submitted,

**Natalie Atkins**

Director, Organizational Advancement  
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