



Phil Plummer
State Representative

Sponsor Testimony – House Bill 647

Chairwoman White, Vice Chair Salvo, Ranking Member Lett, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on the Publicly Funded Child Care Oversight & Integrity Act.

Ohio's publicly funded childcare program is a lifeline for working families. It allows parents to stay in the workforce, supports vulnerable children, and strengthens our economy. But with that investment comes a responsibility: to protect children and to protect taxpayer dollars.

This legislation is about accountability, safety, and integrity.

First, this bill strengthens child safety protections. It allows the Department of Children and Youth to immediately suspend a provider's license when there is credible evidence of abuse, neglect, serious safety violations, or misuse of public funds. If a child is seriously injured, if there are criminal charges related to abuse, or if a provider creates a serious risk to a child's health or safety, the state must be able to act without delay. Children's safety must always come first.

Second, the bill gives the Ohio Attorney General clear authority to investigate and prosecute fraud within the publicly funded childcare program. When there is evidence of criminal or civil violations, the Attorney General can pursue enforcement actions and recover misused taxpayer dollars. As a former sheriff, I can tell you that accountability and enforcement matter. When public funds are misused, we must have the tools to respond quickly and effectively.

Third, this legislation modernizes oversight through data analytics. It invests in automated attendance review and fraud detection tools to identify improper billing and attendance manipulation earlier. Instead of relying solely on manual audits and paperwork, we are equipping the state with modern tools to detect problems before they become large-scale losses.

The bill also updates payment practices and clarifies that exemptions allowing a child to have more than one provider authorization are temporary and limited. These changes reduce opportunities for improper billing while still ensuring flexibility for families who need care during non-traditional hours or short-term transitions.

Importantly, this bill does not reduce eligibility for families currently receiving care. It does not eliminate transitional childcare. It does not target providers who are operating safely and lawfully. The overwhelming majority of childcare providers in Ohio work hard every day to serve children and families with integrity. This legislation supports them by ensuring that bad actors do not undermine the system.

At its core, this bill reinforces Ohio's commitment to child safety, working families, and responsible stewardship of public dollars. When we invest nearly billions in early care and education, we owe it to taxpayers and to our children to make sure those funds are protected and that providers are held to the highest standards.

I respectfully ask for your support of this legislation and would be happy to answer any questions.