Marquita McClendon
Child Care Center Owner, Leader of The CEO Project
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Testimony on House Bill 647

Chair White, Vice Chair Salvo, Ranking Member Lett, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide *OPPONENT* testimony today on HB 647. My name is Marquita McClendon and I am a child care owner of 22 years. I own three child care programs in the Cincinnati, Hamilton County area. For the past seven years, I have helped other providers open and establish their programs. I am a Cincinnati Leader for The CEO Project and I am also an instructor and educator in early childhood education and have been serving in that role for three years. I am prominent in my community of Westwood, Ohio, where I conduct my business operations. And for all of these years, I have been a taxpayer contributing to the State of Ohio.I write today in strong opposition to House Bill 647.

As an administrator, I manage staffing ratios, licensing requirements, attendance tracking, parent communication, curriculum oversight, and compliance reporting daily. I understand accountability. I operate under it every single day. Child care programs like mine are already among the most regulated small businesses in this state.

House Bill 647 increases enforcement and penalties directed at providers without addressing the larger systemic issues within the state's administration of child care funding.

Expanding additional investigative authority when the current oversight system is already functioning is unnecessary and fiscally irresponsible. Ohio child care programs are already monitored through licensing inspections, attendance tracking systems, subsidy reviews, and compliance audits. Adding another layer of investigation does not improve accountability; it wastes taxpayer dollars. At a time when families and providers are struggling, we should not be creating redundant enforcement structures that divert funds away from children and classrooms.

Due process is not a loophole.
It is a constitutional safeguard.

HB 647 allows for suspension of payments and potentially licenses based on suspicion alone, before a full review or hearing occurs. Removing or limiting a provider's ability to respond before financial or operational penalties are imposed creates severe risk. For many programs, suspension of payments even temporarily means immediate closure.

Payroll cannot be met. Rent cannot be paid. Families lose care. Staff lose jobs.

A presumption of guilt before investigation undermines the stability of the entire system.

Due process ensures:

- The right to notice of alleged violations
- The opportunity to respond
- A fair and impartial review
- Protection from arbitrary administrative action

Without these safeguards, providers are vulnerable to administrative error, misinterpretation of data, or flawed attendance reporting systems. If the state's own tracking platforms contain inaccuracies and technology systems are not flawless providers should not bear the burden without an opportunity to defend themselves.

Eliminating or weakening due process does not strengthen accountability. It concentrates power without balance.

Second, during the previous federal administration, states including Ohio received significant federal funding intended to stabilize the child care industry. Those funds came with federal requirements and policy shifts that included:

- Payment based on enrollment rather than attendance
- A 7% cap on parent co-pays
- Waived parent co-fees (for one year)
- An increase in the Market Rate Survey from the 25th percentile (which ranked Ohio 51st lowest in the nation) to 43% still below the 50% benchmark many providers requested

Many providers did not request these changes. These were federal stabilization requirements that states were responsible for implementing appropriately.

If Ohio is now being found insufficient in meeting federal standards, responsibility lies with the state's administration; not with licensed providers who operated under the rules

that were given to us. Providers did not design the funding formulas. Providers did not allocate federal dollars. Providers did not determine reimbursement structures.

Accountability should be directed where decisions were made.

There is serious concern among providers that House Bill 647 is being used to shift blame away from state-level mismanagement of stabilization funds. If funds were misallocated, delayed, or improperly managed, that is a governance issue. It should not become a justification to increase punitive oversight of small business child care operators.

What this bill risks creating is instability.

It increases uncertainty for providers.
It threatens closures in communities already experiencing child care shortages.
It discourages workforce participation in an already strained field.

As an administrator, I can tell you that our focus is on children and families — not navigating escalating punitive systems that do not address the root causes of administrative challenges.

If transparency and integrity are the goals, then accountability must be shared across all levels of governance, including those responsible for managing, allocating, and overseeing child care funds.

Child care administrators are not asking to avoid accountability. We are asking for fairness, collaboration, and responsible governance that strengthens rather than destabilizes the infrastructure families depend on.

I respectfully urge this committee to reject House Bill 647 in its current form and instead engage directly with child care administrators to build solutions that improve systems without harming providers or reducing access for families.

Child care is not a liability.
It is essential economic infrastructure.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide *OPPONENT* testimony today. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Respectfully,
Marquita McClendon
Licensed Child Care Administrator
Leader, The CEO Project