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### Testimony on House Bill 647

Chair White, Vice Chair Slavo, Ranking Member Lett, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide opposing testimony today on HB 647. My name is Simone Gatewood, and I represent family childcare providers in Cuyahoga County. I am here because I believe in OUR children, OUR families, and the dedication and intentional work that childcare providers put in every day. Childcare providers are much more than childcare workers. We are a conduit to healthy families and engaged students. However, House Bill 647 threatens this equitable belief. Inherently, this bill leaves families and childcare providers out in the cold.

When families have limited childcare options, their ability to care for their families is also limited. Many families in our community work non-traditional hours. Due to unlivable wages, these families also work more than one job. Therefore, childcare becomes more than just an option; it becomes a critical must-have service. HB 647 proposes that parents receiving publicly funded childcare should only have one provider. With the sense of continuity, this concept could be ideal for families and caregivers. Instead, it is a fallacy and not a sustainable provision for quality childcare.

Childcare programs are not monolithic. Different programs offer different services based on cost efficiency and family needs. For instance, I operate a before-and-after-school program. This structure allows me to care for my husband, who has a chronic health condition, and operate a needed academic support program. Subsequently, the students in my program progressively show better academic success over time.

Additionally, HB 647 threatens to change the language on a provision intended to support equitable practices. Section 5104.32, lines 302-304 of the bill, prematurely redact wording related to publicly funded childcare payments. Before the federal rule to rescind such elements is required, the state of Ohio is moving swiftly towards the change. I can not help but wonder, why are Ohio childcare workers who were once labeled "essential workers" being neglected?

Unfortunately, my hopes of sustaining, building, and strengthening my business have been thwarted. For a moment, many of us providers felt noticed and appreciated for our hard work. Not only would we be able to sustain our businesses, but we would also be

able to strategically plan and develop programs that would grow our economy, help our students achieve academic success, and reduce our personal stress levels.

I urge this legislature to consider the needs of all children and families in the state of Ohio by preserving the language of the current childcare payment structure and reinstating provisions that allow every family to choose the care arrangement that best supports their well-being.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide an opposition testimony. I am happy to answer and address any questions, thoughts, or concerns.

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