



THE CARE ECONOMY ORGANIZING PROJECT

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Opponent Testimony - 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 Tami Lunan and I am the Director for the CEO Project. We are a statewide organization representing hundreds of childcare providers, parents and families in the childcare industry across Ohio. I am here today, because I believe that the voices of childcare providers need to be heard when discussing changes that will deeply impact our businesses which in turn impacts our families.

We are not here to stop you from going after fraud. Had you placed Rep. Williams' bill on the agenda (House Bill 649), we would likely have shown up as interested parties. Instead, we are at the third hearing on a bill that, *As Introduced*, gives more power to an agency that we - and clearly others - do not trust. Not the business owners and apparently not many legislators. We cannot fix this issue by simply giving unchecked authority to such a department without the appropriate safeguards to protect honest business owners from immediate closure and permanent reputational damage. We need a much more comprehensive discussion, including one regarding what real due process looks like, and that is why I am standing before you today opposed to this bill.

Based on recent inquiries, I also want to preserve for the record that billing based on enrollment rather than daily attendance is a long-standing and widely accepted practice in childcare, early education, and many other service-based systems. It is not fraudulent - it is how programs remain stable, staffed, and safe for children and it is a noted best

practice that private pay centers already establish with private pay parents. Childcare programs incur fixed, ongoing costs regardless of whether a child attends every single day.

As you may have noticed last week, there were no childcare providers who testified in support of this bill, either in-person or through written-only testimony. Based on conversations I've had with hundreds of providers across the state, this response is not surprising. Childcare providers are small business owners who rely on consistent, predictable regulation in order to operate sustainably.

Ongoing shifts in policy direction, coupled with a lack of a clear long-term vision for stabilizing childcare businesses, have made it difficult for providers to feel confident in the department's approach. This has contributed to growing hesitation and uncertainty across the field. As a result, provisions that carry significant business implications, if advanced without clear safeguards and shared understanding, are understandably concerning and difficult to support.

My understanding is that an amendment to this bill may be forthcoming, and our organization is open to reviewing proposed changes. That said, given the scope and impact of the issues involved, we believe this legislation would be better served through a comprehensive substitute bill rather than a limited amendment.

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