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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 Shelly Jackson-Engram, and I am the owner and administrator of Ms. Shelly's Place Early Childhood Development Center in Moraine, Ohio, and I represent the CEO Project.

I serve working families whose ability to remain employed depends on Publicly Funded Child Care. I stand in firm opposition to Ohio House Bill 647 because the consequences of this bill are not theoretical — they are immediate, measurable, and economically damaging.

Many families in my program rely on childcare assistance to work in hospitals, warehouses, schools, retail stores, and manufacturing plants. If eligibility is reduced or copayments increase, those parents will not magically find alternatives. They will reduce hours, quit jobs, or leave children in unstable arrangements. That directly reduces workforce participation in our communities.

When families lose access to childcare, employers lose reliable workers. When employers lose workers, local economies weaken. This is not just a childcare issue — it is a workforce and economic stability issue. For children, the damage is equally serious. When subsidies are lost, children are forced out of stable learning environments.

They lose consistent teachers, structured early education, and critical developmental support during the most formative years of brain development. Disruption at this stage affects school readiness, behavior, and long-term academic success.

The cost of instability now becomes the cost of intervention later. Providers like me, publicly funded childcare is not a bonus — it is the financial foundation that keeps our doors open. Childcare centers operate on thin margins. We cannot absorb enrollment losses or unstable reimbursements. If funding access shrinks, providers will reduce staff, close classrooms, or shut down entirely. And when childcare

centers close, communities feel it immediately. Parents leave jobs. Employers lose productivity.

Families fall further behind. You cannot strengthen Ohio's economy while weakening the infrastructure that allows parents to work. You cannot demand workforce participation while removing the support system that makes participation possible. When we remove childcare, we remove opportunity. And when childcare collapses, families collapse — and our communities follow.

This bill is not a minor policy adjustment. It is a breaking point for working families, small businesses, and the workforce Ohio depends on.

Thank you for your time and consideration.