



Written Testimony on House Bill 647
Submitted by Learning Grove
Ohio House Children and Human Services Committee
3/1/2026

Chair Andrea White, Vice Chair Jodi Salvi, Ranking Member Crystal Lett, and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on House Bill 647.

My name is Patti Gleason, and I serve as Chief Program Officer for Learning Grove, a nonprofit early childhood education organization serving children and families across Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky. For more than 40 years, Learning Grove has provided high-quality early care and education to infants, toddlers, and preschool children. We serve families across income levels, including many supported through Ohio's Publicly Funded Child Care (PFCC) program. Our ability to serve families depends on a childcare system that is stable, predictable, and aligned with the operational realities of providing high-quality care.

Learning Grove supports accountability and responsible stewardship of public funding. However, we are concerned that provisions within HB 647 may unintentionally destabilize childcare providers and reduce access for families.

Due Process and Regulatory Stability

Learning Grove supports strong oversight and compliance. Public trust depends on accountability. However, HB 647 expands fraud referral mechanisms without clearly outlining safeguards, timelines, or fair administrative review processes for providers.

Childcare providers operate with significant fixed costs, including staff wages, payroll taxes, rent or mortgage, utilities, insurance, and classroom materials. These expenses exist regardless of payment delays or administrative reviews.

A regulatory environment must be predictable, transparent, and balanced. Providers must have confidence that enforcement actions include clear standards, timely review, and due process protections. When regulatory processes are unclear or unpredictable, providers become hesitant to expand, invest in facilities, or enroll publicly funded families.

Stability and clarity allow providers to invest in staff, maintain quality, and expand access. Uncertainty discourages growth and weakens the childcare infrastructure Ohio families depend on.

Loss of Presumptive Eligibility and Financial Risk for Providers

The elimination of presumptive eligibility creates significant operational and financial challenges for childcare providers and the families they serve.

Presumptive eligibility previously allowed families to enroll quickly while counties completed the formal eligibility determination process. Without it, counties may take up to 90 days to approve a PFCC application.

Childcare providers cannot sustain months without payment while continuing to meet staffing ratios and licensing requirements. Providers must still pay staff, maintain safe environments, and cover operating expenses regardless of whether reimbursement has been received.

Without presumptive eligibility, providers must either turn families away or assume financial risk they cannot afford. This shifts the burden of administrative delays onto childcare providers and limits access to care for working families.

Enrollment-Based Staffing Requires Enrollment-Based Policy Stability

Childcare programs must staff classrooms based on enrollment, not daily attendance. Even when a child is absent, providers must still pay teachers, maintain safe environments, and meet licensing ratio requirements.

This model is consistent with how private-pay childcare, Head Start programs, and K–12 education systems operate. Providers cannot adjust staffing on a daily basis based on attendance fluctuations.

If Ohio intends to align publicly funded childcare with other education systems, reimbursement and eligibility policies must reflect the fixed-cost structure of providing care. Policies that introduce payment uncertainty undermine the financial stability necessary to maintain quality programs.

Administrative Burden and System Inefficiencies

Administrative complexity within the PFCC system contributes to delays and inefficiencies that affect both providers and families. Counties are currently required to enter eligibility information into multiple systems, creating duplication and slowing approval timelines.

These delays create financial uncertainty for providers and delay access to care for families. Providers must hold classroom space without payment, and families face barriers to maintaining employment while waiting for eligibility determinations.

System improvements should focus on streamlining administrative processes, reducing duplication, and creating efficient systems that support timely access to care.

Avoiding a Two-Tier Childcare System

Childcare programs serve children and families, not funding categories. Learning Grove's classrooms include children from diverse economic backgrounds, creating stable and inclusive learning environments.

Policies that introduce barriers or instability for publicly funded childcare risk creating a two-tier system that separates children based on income. This reduces access and creates inequities for families who rely on childcare in order to work.

Ohio's childcare system should promote integration, stability, and equal access for all children and families.

Impact on Ohio's Workforce and Economy

Childcare providers are essential to Ohio's workforce infrastructure. Families rely on childcare in order to work, and employers rely on childcare in order to maintain a stable workforce.

When providers face payment delays, financial instability, or regulatory uncertainty, they may be forced to limit enrollment or stop accepting publicly funded children. This reduces access for families and weakens workforce participation.

A stable childcare system is essential to supporting Ohio's economy.

Learning Grove respectfully urges the Committee to ensure that HB 647 supports both accountability and stability by:

- Providing clear due process protections and transparent enforcement procedures
- Minimizing payment delays and financial risk for providers
- Streamlining administrative systems to improve efficiency
- Aligning policies with the operational realities of childcare programs

Ohio's childcare providers are committed to serving children, supporting families, and strengthening communities. Policies that provide stability, clarity, and fairness will allow providers to continue this essential work.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,
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