

# Opponent Testimony on H.B. 647

Oral Delivery Draft  
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Chair White, Vice Chair Salvo, Ranking Member Lett, and members of the House Children and Human Services Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Justin Evans, and I own precious cargo childcare. I'm here today in opposition to House Bill 647.

Let me start with something simple: if someone is truly stealing public money, they should be investigated, and they should be held accountable. I do not think anyone in this room disagrees with that.

But that is exactly why this bill is so troubling.

HB 647 feels less like a carefully targeted response to proven problems in Ohio, and more like a knee-jerk reaction to the Minnesota fraud case. That case was terrible. But Ohio should not write child care policy based on headlines from another state. Ohio should write policy based on concrete evidence here in Ohio.

That is the question I keep coming back to: where is the evidence?

Where is the concrete evidence of widespread fraud in Ohio's publicly funded child care system that justifies stripping away appeal rights, expanding agency power, and treating providers like suspects first and partners second?

Because when I read this bill, I do not see a narrow anti-fraud tool. I see a broad expansion of power.

This bill allows the Department of Children and Youth to suspend a license without a prior hearing based on suspicion. It makes decisions about overpayments, fund recovery, and contract suspensions final and not subject to appeal. And it puts more taxpayer money into expanding these enforcement systems. And that leads me to a very basic question:

Why are we giving a large government agency more money and power for what they were already doing successfully? That screams government waste.

And I say that because I have lived what agency power already looks like in real life.

At my center, DCY came for an audit. We had two children who had previously disenrolled after receiving summer care. We had served those children. We had done the work. But when DCY was onsite, we did not have all of the records for those two children immediately available.

Because of that, we had to repay about \$5,000.

Not because the children were not served. Not because we invented attendance. Not because we committed fraud.

But because we did not have every document in hand at that exact moment.

And we did not get a real second look. We did not get meaningful flexibility. We did not get what most people would consider basic fairness.

So when I hear that Ohio needs even more power, even less review, and even fewer checks on agency decisions, I have to ask: for what?

The state already has enforcement tools. The state already audits providers. The state already has the power to recover money. Providers already face serious consequences, even for paperwork problems.

So let's be honest about what this bill does.

It does not just go after fraud. It removes due process.

And due process is not a gift to bad actors. Due process is what protects honest people when government gets it wrong.

That matters, because there is a huge difference between intentional fraud and an administrative mistake.

But this bill does not respect that difference nearly enough.

In child care, we already operate under intense scrutiny. We manage state rules, licensing requirements, ratios, staffing shortages, parent needs, attendance records, billing systems, and constant paperwork. Sometimes it feels like a missing form gets treated like I'm running a criminal enterprise out of the toddler room. I promise you, the most suspicious thing happening at my center is usually someone hiding markers in their sock.

A little humor aside, this is serious.

When you remove appeals, you are not just punishing bad actors. You are putting every honest provider at risk of being steamrolled by a system that does not always stop to ask whether the punishment fits the problem.

If this committee truly wants to fight fraud, then fight fraud. I support that.

But require evidence. Preserve appeals. Distinguish theft from clerical error. Target intentional misconduct instead of casting a cloud over the entire child care sector.

Child care providers are not asking for special treatment. We are asking for fair treatment.

We are asking you not to make policy out of panic.

And we are asking you not to take a system that already has enforcement power and make it harsher, more expensive, and less accountable without clear proof that this is necessary.

Please do not pass HB 647 as written.

Thank you for your time, and I would be happy to answer any questions.