

# Testimony on SCR3 and SB 50



## Testimony before the Commerce and Labor Committee Child Labor and Employment Practices

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### **Testimony in Opposition to Child Labor and Employment changes outlined in SCR3 and SB 50:**

Good afternoon, Chair Johnson, Vice Chair Lear, Ranking Member McNally, and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding SCR3 and SB50. My name is Brianna Booker, and I am the policy associate for the Children's Defense Fund- Ohio. We are a statewide, multi-issue, child advocacy organization that has worked on behalf of children, young people, and families in Ohio for forty-four years. Our mission is to build community so that young people grow up with dignity, hope, and joy.

I am here to speak in Opposition to Child Labor and Employment changes outlined in SCR3 and SB 50.

SCR3 states that the proposal is an effort to remedy the 22 million US jobs lost during the COVID pandemic and the current worker shortage remaining here in Ohio. While these are legitimate concerns for Ohioans, these bills do not provide lasting solutions; instead, they ask our young people to sacrifice their academic futures for short-term relief. In the words of CDF-Ohio's state director, Dr. John Stanford, an educator with 20-plus years in public education:

"I think everyone believes that a safe and positive work opportunity provides a number of important skills, training, and lessons that our young people need to learn as they grow up, graduate high school, and become productive citizens. The work opportunity, however, cannot be to the detriment of their immediate and long-term wellbeing."

Expanding the time that young people can work takes away from their opportunity to successfully complete schoolwork and to have a proper night's rest, possibly leading to lower academic achievement, a barrier to young people finding and sustaining work in the future. In fact, studies have shown that extended work hours for youth may [contribute to higher school drop-out rates](#). Prior research concerning varying state employment laws for those under the age of 16 has also identified [a correlation](#) between less work rules for minors and lower performance on

standardized tests. For poor youth and youth of color, who are already impacted [by disparities](#) in standardized test scores, those gaps will only be widened by the presence of lower labor law standards and expectations. This legislation provides only a temporary reprieve for our workforce, one that will vanish as our young people and our economy mature and face the long-term consequences of an incomplete education.

The academic disparities caused by expanded working hours for minors are also likely to have other negative implications for children marginalized by our society, pushing struggling families further into abject poverty and placing a heavier burden on the backs of their children. In fact, research suggests that because of historic disparities in neighborhood planning, children of color may have fewer options for work other than [unsuitable jobs](#), and may be more likely to leave school to complete those tasks. Furthermore, as of 2023, the United States Department of Labor reported an 88 percent increase in the number of child labor law violations since 2019. Lowering child labor regulations and expectations will only exacerbate these issues and disproportionately impact Black children, according to the [Annenberg Institute at Brown University](#).

### **Conclusion**

Essentially, enabling children to work later each day would be nothing more than a temporary band-aid on the open wound of joblessness in Ohio, creating a higher labor shortage in the future by socially disinvesting in the education of our young people. SCR3 and SB 50 do our children a disservice by asking them to fix our present situation instead of enabling them to focus on their future. Put very simply, Children should not have to be the solution to adult problems. Again, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding this important issue. At this time, I am happy to answer any questions the committee may have.