



**Interested Party Testimony- Finance Committee
HB 96 — FY26-27 State Operating Budget
March 13th, 2025**

Chair Stewart, Vice Chair Dovilla, and Ranking Member Sweeney and members of the Finance Committee — Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on House Bill 96 in support of The Childhood League Center's funding request which would appropriate \$250,000 in each fiscal year through the Ohio Department of Children and Youth Part C Early Intervention line to provide intensive early intervention and educational services, providing services and support resources for families and providers serving children with developmental delays, and to support the Play and Language for Autistic Youngsters (PLAY) Project for young children with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

My name is Megan Kloss, and I serve as the Early Intervention and Family Services Supervisor at The Childhood League Center.

The Childhood League Center serves children with a variety of developmental delays including but not limited to autism, cognitive disability, visual impairment, deafness or hearing impairment, emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairment, speech or language impairment, traumatic brain injury, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, and/or fine or global motor delays. Research shows that early diagnosis of and interventions for children with special needs are more likely to have major long-term positive effects on later skills. The sooner a child receives intervention services, the greater the chance for learning and progress. In fact, recent guidelines suggest starting an integrated developmental and behavioral intervention as soon as autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is diagnosed or seriously suspected. With early intervention, some children with autism make so much progress their symptoms are no longer evident.

In my role, I provide onsite supervision (reflective and administrative), guidance, and mentoring to the early intervention providers. I also ensure contract compliance, efficient program implementation, and delivery of high-quality, evidence-based services.

I would like to share a story of beauty of early intervention and how it can truly change lives.

"Jake (*name changed for confidentiality)" began Early Intervention (EI) services with The Childhood League Center in December 2023, at 30 months old, due to a qualifying diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder (ASD). When Jake started services, the family had immediate concerns about his behavior, which included tantrums, aggressive behavior toward peers and adults, and difficulty with transitions, both at home and daycare. The family needed Jake to continue in daycare, as both parents worked outside of the home. They also rarely took Jake out in the community because of the behaviors. The EI provider began providing weekly services, as Jake only had limited time left in early intervention before turning 3 years old. The provider alternated visits between supporting the teachers at daycare and his family in the home or community. During initial visits, Jake struggled with self-regulation, as he was constantly moving around, crashing into people and furniture, throwing objects, and loudly repeating phrases until they were acknowledged. The provider explained to Jake's family that this is common in children who are



diagnosed with ASD and suggested they complete a Sensory Profile, which would assist in determining strategies to help Jake become self-regulated and be more successful in all environments.

After a few months of services, the daycare was no longer contacting the family about Jake's behaviors. He was no longer pushing and hitting his teachers or peers. Jake was interacting with toys and items in the classroom appropriately, instead of throwing them across the room. He was also easily transitioning between activities without screaming and throwing himself on the floor. After just 6 months of services, Jake's parents were amazed with his progress, not only at home, but in the community and at daycare as well. Because Jake's time in EI was ending due to turning 3, he had to complete the preschool transition process with the local school district to see if he would qualify for an Individualized Education Program (IEP). Despite having an ASD diagnosis, Jake did not qualify for services after age 3 with his school district! Jake is now self-regulated, and the family feels confident in preparing him for any new environment they want him to explore in the community.

I have many stories like this. My day-to-day is working with children, families, and early interventionists but it was important for me to be here today to share just how important early intervention is for our kids.

I respectfully ask you to support our amendment of \$250,000 in each fiscal year in the Ohio Department of Children and Youth Part C Early Intervention line.

Thank you.

Megan Kloss