

Tarrezz Thompson-FCC
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Testimony on House Bill 96

Chair Stewart, Vice Chair Dovilla, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today on HB 96. My name is Tarrezz Thompson, I operate a family home based type B program in Columbus and I represent the CEO Project. I am here to ask that you support Ohio kids, families, and childcare providers by including the childcare improvements outlined in Governor DeWine's executive budget, including investing in childcare as the workforce behind the workforce.

As a childcare provider in Franklin County, the cost of living for a family of 4 averages \$3,300 a month. That equates to around \$20 per hour. The cost of living doesn't incorporate the cost of childcare that can range from \$700-\$1600 a month per child. That's \$1400-\$3200 for a family of 4. A family of 4 also does not qualify at the current eligibility rate making \$20 per hour. I state these numbers because I'm a family of 4 and a childcare provider who also has similar cost of living expenses, outside of my financial business obligations to maintain operations. Often, I'm pulling from my living expenses budget to cover the cost of business operations. The families aren't able to keep up with the cost of care and I'm unable to make any more sacrifices and still maintain stability for my family. I'm here because I believe Governor Dewine held that in his mind when he wrote portions of the budget such as increasing eligibility to 160%, keeping copays at 7% for families and moving to pay based on enrollment vs attendance for providers. Pay based on enrollment creates predictable income similar to our private pay partners and reduces the need to borrow from living expenses to support business shortages that happen with attendance based pay. Each of these decisions moves the state in the direction of

creating stability for both families and the workforce that serves them to stay in the workforce. I also believe that one of the most transitional ways to increase right size investment is by moving away from the current market rate survey and into a cost model system to operate within the true cost of care. I have seen how the needs of the community and the children we serve shift to a demand higher than preparation for kindergarten. Our children are needing more intentional learning experiences to close development gaps which require higher trained and certified staff. The current model does not account for the investment in training, cost of goods increasing, and livable wages needed to match the increasing cost of living. Under a cost model system, the state would have a better picture of the true cost for care and the real investment that's needed to support its future citizens.

As a business program in the community for over 14 years which identifies as an inclusion program, I've invested in multiple families with a child with identified and unidentified disabilities. In service, each child has a unique developmental need to create a least restrictive environment. Although the recent increases have created mild relief, the truth of the challenge is there needs to be a system that creates a whole picture of the cost of care for all services including inclusion programs. Financial decisions for eligibility and reimbursement are based on archaic numbers that historically result in low investment in the workforce that supports the workforce. When considering the budget, I'm asking you to consider keeping the investments from Governor Dewine, the cost of living working families have, and the tools that are identifying the cost of operations of the very businesses that make it possible for workers to work.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony today. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

