

Marquita McClendon  
Future Achievers Academy  
Wednesday, April 2, 2025  
Testimony on House Bill 96

Chair Stewart, Vice Chair Dovilla, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to allow me to provide my testimony today on HB 96. My name is Marquita McClendon, I am the owner of Future Achievers Academy and I represent the CEO Project. I am here to ask for your support for Ohio kids, families, and childcare providers by including the childcare improvements outlined in Governor DeWine's executive budget, especially:

- **Retaining childcare staff and pay competitive wages by implementing the Childcare Worker Voucher Program**
  - A child care staff worker makes \$12/hour with one dependent; their copay can be anywhere from \$75-\$100 per week for their child to attend the program.
  - By implementing the childcare voucher program, we can offer a higher rate of pay \$12-\$15 while their child can attend the program with minimal cost to the staff worker and also the program.
- **Removing the 2 year waiver and implementing enrollment over attendance can stabilize the childcare industry immediately while increasing the reimbursement rate to the 75th percentile**
  - Johnny is a school age/preschooler and attends a school 9am-4pm. We complete a customized school schedule that blocks out his hours that he is at school. My program is open from 6am-6pm.
    - Johnny attends 8a-9a and back 4p-5p but he only came 5 days one week (2 hours a day x 5 days=10 hours= part time rate of pay).
    - Johnny attends 8a-9a and back 4p-5p but he only came 3 days one week (2 hours a day x 3 days=6 hours= hourly rate of pay which is \$9).
    - Both examples, Johnny was breakfast, snack and I had to pay 2 staff members 6-10 hours to provide care for him
  - There is no stability or consistency in pay which is so bad for business and this an example of why enrollment over attendance is important.
  - Ohio's Market Rate Survey structures our pay rate across the state. We will research the data needed to show a care of cost model which is a model that is used successfully in many other states. Currently, we are receiving the 50th percentile market survey rate.

- **Ensure reimbursement increases childcare workers by mandating at least a \$20/hr wage**
  - Unfortunately the rate of pay for our hourly rate is \$9 per hour
  - Going back to the previous example. ( Johnny attends 8a-9a and back 4p-5p but he only came 3 days one week (2 hours a day x 3 days=6 hours= hourly rate of pay which we are requesting to be \$20)
  - Implementing enrollment over attendance will also eliminate the hourly pay rate all together
- **Cap co-pays for PFCC families at 7% of their income and increase the FPL to 300%**
  - Mom has an infant dependent and she makes \$12 per hour, she may qualify for PFCC but so she may have a copay from \$75-\$100 per wk
  - Mom could make \$12 per hour \* 40 hours per week=\$480\*4 weeks=\$1,920/.07=\$134/4 weeks=\$34 per week copay
  - Mom has an infant dependent and she makes \$15 per hour, she will not qualify for PFCC/Childcare Choice. (\$15\*40 hrs/wk= \$600\*4/wks=\$2400) Hamilton County infant rate is \$1200/month. That would be half of the parents' check going towards childcare.
- **Please keep presumptive eligibility for child care enrollment applicants**
  - Currently, Dad's application process; an application is submitted April 1st and it is taking the county (14-28 weeks to process the application) April 24 the application is processed. The childcare program can care for the children starting April 1 to assist the family with childcare.
    - If the parent is approved then the family can continue with childcare and the program can back tap for payment.
    - If the parent gets denied then; a payment on denial is given.
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As a childcare provider in Hamilton County in Cincinnati, District 24, on the Westside of town, I met with House Representative Isaacshon and expressed the same concerns addressed in this letter. April 1st marked my 20th year career anniversary. And I have been walking within my purpose the entire time and it led me here today. I am just amazed at how everything is coming full circle within divine order.

The same divine order that I feel the State of Ohio needs to align with in regards to how we are looked at as a state. Having one of the highest rates for infant mortality, having the highest rate of opioid addiction, and having the highest rate of suicide is devastating. While our childcare and education system is failing at 51st at one point.

Let's change this narrative about the State of Ohio. My state is too beautiful to be looked at with all the negative baggage, even though it's attached to a lot of funding but there also is funding in the good things as well like funding our education system for our children.

I became a childcare educator at the age of 21 and I have grown throughout my years being a childcare educator. I started advocating in November 2023 with the CEO Project. I am a Bronze Star program and we work hard for those ratings. We are implementing Teachers Strategy Creative Curriculum and now we added the Science and Reading portion. Aligned with the assessment and observation tools to equip our programs to assess and detect learning disabilities, behavior disabilities and many special needs issues that a child may have early on. The Department of Children of Youth has aligned a phenomenal Step Up to Quality approach that has given us the tools to be a successful educational program. Kentucky child care programs don't even own a base curriculum and they are not required to use them. Those are the positive attributes that I love to brag about that my State requires of me.

There are so many child care programs that have closed due to low enrollment, inconsistency in pay and also due to the current economical changes. That is why it is so important that we implement:

- **Retaining childcare staff and pay competitive wages by implementing the Childcare Worker Voucher Program**
- **Removing the 2 year waiver and implementing enrollment over attendance can stabilize the childcare industry immediately while increasing the reimbursement rate to the 75th percentile**
- **Ensure reimbursement increases childcare workers by mandating at least a \$20/hr wage or remove the hourly wage completely**
- **Cap co-pays for PFCC families at 7% of their income and increase the FPL to 300%**
- **Please keep presumptive eligibility for child care enrollment applicants**

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