



Chair Schmidt, Vice Chair Deeter, Ranking Member Somani, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on House Bill 561.

My name is Michelle Bieber, and I serve as a Board Member for Ohio Association of Childcare Providers (OACCP), also an Owner/Operator of a small educational childcare center in northwest Ohio. I am here today to express my opposition to HB 561 and to highlight the serious concerns this bill raises for child care providers, families, and small businesses across Ohio.

Our organization serves families throughout our community, providing early learning, school-age programming, and support services that allow parents to participate fully in the workforce. We care for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and school-age children—many of whom we have served have been medically fragile or have immune vulnerabilities. Protecting the health and safety of the children and families we serve is our center's number one priority.

CURRENT LAW ALREADY SUPPORTS PARENT CHOICE AND PROVIDER FLEXIBILITY

Ohio law requires children enrolled in licensed child care programs to be immunized unless they qualify for one of three exemptions. At the same time, private child care centers maintain the right to adopt their own enrollment policies, including requirements around vaccinations, so long as those policies are communicated to families.

This flexibility is essential. Child care centers are not public schools. They are private businesses responsible for serving diverse populations with differing health needs. Families who prefer programs that enroll unvaccinated children currently have options, while families with newborns, premature infants, or medically fragile children can seek centers that require full immunization.

HB 561 REMOVES A CRITICAL CHOICE FROM FAMILIES AND PROVIDERS

By requiring centers to deliver state-mandated vaccine notifications without allowing for modification, the bill effectively eliminates a provider's ability to maintain an immunization-required policy.

This change would:

- Remove safe options for families with vulnerable children, who rely on centers that require immunizations for all enrolled children. This also affects family members who are in and out of the facility such as pregnant mothers, grandparents and family members with morbidity issues who support the attending children.
- Limit the professional discretion of child care operators, who understand the unique health needs of their enrolled population.

- Reduce parental choice whether publicly funded or private pay, despite the bill's stated intent to improve transparency. All Families deserve options—not a one-size-fits-all mandate that erases existing pathways for safety-based decision-making.

HB 561 INTRODUCES REGULATORY BURDENS THAT UNDERMINE STABILITY

In Ohio, Child care businesses already operate within an extraordinarily complex regulatory environment. HB 561 adds new administrative risks, including:

- Strict notification requirements with potential penalties for minor errors
- A 14-day complaint investigation timeline that is unrealistic for agencies already understaffed
- Severe consequences such as license suspension or revocation for noncompliance within 30 days

These measures create an enforcement environment that is punitive, not supportive. Small business providers operate on thin margins and can become financially vulnerable. Small business is largely different than public entities. Whereas, when a public school is closed due to a health crisis the money stream continues. For Private entities, even temporary disruptions—such as closures due to exposure to a vaccine-preventable disease—can lead to unpaid operational days, reduced enrollment, or permanent closure.

CONCLUSION

As written, HB 561 limits parental choice, removes essential flexibility for small private business child care centers, and places unnecessary regulatory burdens on providers who are already struggling to meet the needs of Ohio's families.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask the Committee to consider removing child care centers from the bill or allowing private business centers to continue adopting vaccination policies that align with the needs of the families they serve.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.