



June 6, 2025

**Testimony Before the Ohio State Legislature
By Kimberly Jarvis, Executive Director, On Purpose Academy
In Support of HB 177 and SB 177**

Chair, Vice Chair, Ranking Member, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Kimberly Jarvis, and I proudly serve as the Executive Director and Founder of On Purpose Academy in Dayton, Ohio. I am also a member of the CEO Project, standing alongside hundreds of providers across this state who wake up every day committed to nurturing Ohio's youngest minds and supporting the families who depend on us.

For the past eight years, I have built On Purpose Academy with a simple but radical belief: every child deserves access to quality early education—no matter their zip code, income level, or life circumstance. We've served more than 1,000 children and families, many of whom are navigating generational poverty, housing instability, trauma, and the deep inequities embedded in our systems. And yet, we show up—relentlessly, faithfully, and with excellence.

We do more than teach letters or count numbers with our students. We wipe tears. We feed children when there's no food at home. We coach parents through crisis. We give hope where others have walked away. We continue to provide and give and serve when it would be much easier to quit. Children deserve more so quitting is not an option.

And we didn't quit when the world shut down.

During COVID-19, while everything else closed, we stayed open. We were classified as *essential workers*—not because it was convenient, but because it was true. We risked our lives so that Ohio's economy could keep moving. So nurses could go to hospitals. So delivery drivers could bring supplies. So educators could keep teaching remotely.

And the question I ask you now is this: If what we do was essential then, why would we be treated as anything less now? The truth is—we are *more essential* now than ever before. The demand for quality child care has never been higher, and the supply has never been more fragile. Without urgent, structural support, the entire system is at risk of collapse. This would be an essence another form of a pandemic.

That is why I am here to strongly urge your support for **HB 96 and HB 177**. These bills are not policy proposals—they are oxygen masks for a system gasping for breath. Raising eligibility to at least **160% of the federal poverty level** ensures that families who are working hard—but still struggling—can access stable, reliable child care. When parents can plan financially, providers like me can plan sustainably. This isn't just social policy. It's economic infrastructure.

I also implore you to reinstate the Peer Review Appeal Process, which was removed from the substitute bill. The oversight system today is inconsistent, punitive, and often detached from the lived experience of child care providers. We are constantly navigating moving targets and unclear standards—often penalized not for safety concerns, but for clerical or technical issues. And yet, the consequences—such as losing a Step Up To Quality rating—are severe and immediate.

Every business in Ohio deserves a fair process. The peer review model would allow seasoned experts in our field—those who understand the pressures of staffing, compliance, and service—to review and evaluate these infractions with both discernment and dignity. We aren't asking for less accountability—we're asking for fairness and partnership.

Lastly, I urge your support for **SB 177**, a smart, business-forward bill that addresses the child care staffing crisis head-on. By offering free child care to early childhood educators in exchange for their work, this bill removes one of the biggest barriers keeping qualified staff out of the field. It's a multiplier strategy: one worker opens a classroom, allowing more children to receive care, and more parents to reenter the workforce. It is common sense, cost-effective, and urgent.

The bottom line is this: Ohio cannot afford to treat child care as an afterthought any longer. When we fund child care, we fuel the workforce. We stabilize families. We invest in children's futures. And we prove that Ohio is serious about its own prosperity.

Let's stop being last in the nation. Let's lead. Leading is the History of Ohio

Support HB 96. Support HB 177. Support SB 177. Invest in Equity. Invest in a system that works—for everyone.

Thank you for your time, your service, and your commitment to our children. I am available for any questions. I can be reached at 937-673-6988 or at kjarvis@topsadvantage.org

Sincerely

Kimberly Jarvis