

Tashianna Kwakye

June 6, 2025

Testimony on *Sub Bill* House Bill 96

Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Finance Committee,

My name is Tashianna Kwakye, I am the owner of multiple childcare businesses here in Ohio, including Columbus, Dayton, and pending expansion to Grove City, Warren, and Westerville. I am also with the CEO Project. I am here to ask that you support Ohio's families and childcare businesses.

I have dedicated my time, money, and energy to specializing in early education. I have invested nearly thirty years in the field. However, I worry that my investment is at risk. With Ohio grading last in childcare funding, I can't help but wonder if my pursuit of this field was the wrong decision, or perhaps, I should have pursued medicine.

I know we have made strides, but Ohio still has more work to do to fund childcare businesses for families, and we need to do it expeditiously. I am asking that you support adding Senate Bill 177 to the budget. This bill is good for business. Currently, eighty (80%) of the childcare employees in our Columbus company need childcare. At our Dayton location, I have several candidates, as we speak, who are sitting on our job offers because they cannot afford the cost of childcare. If these parents can work for us, then we would be able to reopen classrooms and offer more spots, therefore reducing the costs of care. I also want to ask that you move the eligibility rates for childcare to 160% of the federal poverty level. Too many working parents are left to struggle to afford childcare. When you invest in childcare for families, we can see clear returns.

Lastly, in the substitute version of the bill the **Peer Review Appeal Process** language was removed. This puts businesses like mine in jeopardy when we face inconsistencies in our inspection processes and then have no way to appeal the frivolous citations. We are not asking the state to turn a blind eye to safety issues. We are asking for a fair appeal process when inspections lead to revocation of our licenses or removal of our Step Up to Quality ratings.

It happens. It happens to all of us. For example, the state rules permit school-age children to be alone, run errands in or out of the program, or leave the childcare program to walk

to school or home. But our Columbus program received a moderate risk non-compliance that damages our reputation and threatens our Step Up to Quality Rating because a teacher allowed a school-age child to remain safely occupied in a classroom while supervising preschool children to the bathroom nearby. There are bound to be different views or interpretations on what the rules say, we are simply asking for a fair process of review from experts who work in the field.

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