

My name is Kyra Paul, I am a member of the Ohio Parent Advocacy Network as well as a parent to a 3rd grader and a kindergarten student in South Western City school here in Franklin county. I am here today to restore the governor's budget proposal which included critical investments to childcare, maternal and infant health, as well as early learning.

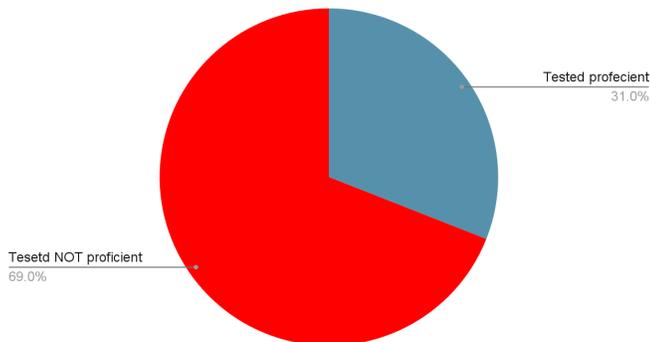
I would like to focus on restoring the budget proposal regarding Early language and literacy along with the Kindergarten Readiness assessment.

Both of my children were able to attend the head start program that was also affiliated with South Western City schools. They both received safe, quality, and affordable childcare and because of that program both of my children were ready for kindergarten and tested proficient on their Kindergarten Readiness assessment.

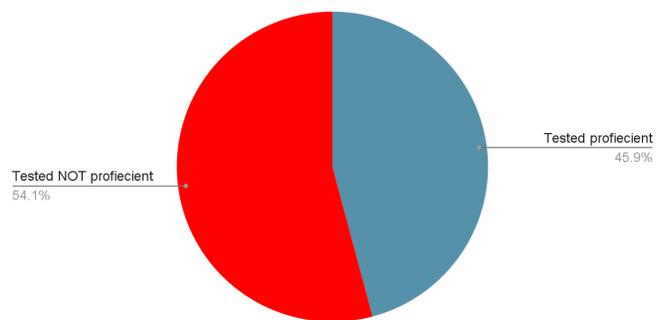
The kindergarten readiness assessment is the only tool the state has to measure early childhood experiences for each student. It is important to get baseline data so gap closing goals can be identified and met for every child.

In the fall of 2024 South Western City schools tested 1,407 incoming kindergarten students. 31% of those students tested proficient on the Kindergarten Readiness assessment. However 410 (30%) of those 1,407 students attended a district preschool and 46% of those students tested proficient on the same assessment. A 15% increase. It is important to note that 179 of the 410 were students identified as having a disability.

1,407=Total KRA in 2024 in South Western City Schools



410= kindergarten students previously enrolled in SWCS preschool



However South Western city schools saw a significant drop in KRA test scores for the first time in 2024. This is most likely due to the rising costs in our community with parents and caregivers lack of ability to afford safe, quality, and affordable child care. Without the Kindergarten readiness assessment these trends would be missed and children would not be given the opportunity to succeed because teachers would not be able to meet the child where they are.

I would also like to urge this committee to restore additional funding for the governor's imagination library. When my oldest was born in 2016 the Imagination library was only available in very specific zip codes around Ohio and our home was not in one of them, but my mom's was. I enrolled my daughter into the Imagination Library at "Grammy's" house. This gave other adults, not just myself and my husband, the opportunity to interact with and read to my daughter. She received 1 book every month until she was 5. We looked forward to receiving our new book in the mail each month. So many of those books were my daughters favorites that were read so often that they fell apart. Each book that came was a perfect selection for her current age and developmental stage. The last book she received when she turned 5 was about going to Kindergarten. By 2019 when my youngest was born the program had expanded to all children in the state of Ohio birth to 5! What an incredible way to increase early literacy and bonding.

These investments will not only help our children thrive but it will boost Ohio's workforce and economy. I urge you to fund these initiatives to ensure every child gets the best start in life.

My ask : to RESTORE additional funding for the Governor's Imagination Library; and RESTORE the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment—the only tool the state has to understand the impact of early childhood experiences for each child.

Thank you for your time and commitment to Ohio's children and families. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.