

Terri M Sims CEO/Owner

New Direction Learning Center Inc dba: Playtime Nursery School
821 Whitmore Avenue Dayton, Ohio 45417

May 13, 2025

Testimony on House Bill 96

Chair Huffman, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 96. My name is Terri M Sims, and I am the CEO and Owner of *Playtime Nursery School* in Montgomery County, Ohio. I also represent the CEO Project, an advocacy initiative supporting childcare entrepreneurs across our state. Today, I strongly urge you to support Ohio's children, families, and childcare providers by including the childcare improvements outlined in Governor DeWine's executive budget—**especially funding federally required changes to co-pay caps and investing in childcare as the workforce behind the workforce.**

As a business owner who has operated an early childhood learning center in Montgomery County for **over 28 years**, I have proudly served more than **4,000 publicly funded children and their families**, many of whom live at or below the poverty line. Every day, I witness how quality childcare is not just a service—it is a **lifeline**. Without access to reliable, affordable care, parents are forced to choose between working and caring for their children, between progress and survival.

I recently worked with a young mother of three, all under the age of six. She was offered a full-time job that would've lifted her family out of poverty, but due to slight increases in her income, her childcare co-pay doubled—making work financially impossible. That mother eventually turned down the job. These are the kinds of impossible choices families in our communities are being forced to make. **When co-pay thresholds are too high, and eligibility standards too rigid, we trap families in cycles of poverty instead of helping them out of it.**

Childcare providers are also struggling to survive. Despite our vital role, reimbursement rates remain outdated and unsustainable. The cost of staffing,

training, food, transportation, and state compliance continues to rise, yet centers like mine are expected to do more with less. Without increased investment and fair rates, we risk losing qualified providers across the state—and with them, critical access to early education.

That is why I once again urge you to support the childcare improvements outlined in Governor DeWine's executive budget—**funding federally required changes to co-pay caps and investing in childcare as the workforce behind the workforce**. I also ask that you consider **raising eligibility thresholds and reimbursement rates** so that both families and providers can thrive.

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

Respectfully,

Terri M Sims

CEO/Owner, New Direction Learning Center Inc dba Playtime Nursery School
Montgomery County, Ohio