

**Shelley Hill**

**Family Action Network Parent Advocate**

**May 14, 2025**

Ohio Senate Finance Committee Chairperson Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

My name is Shelley Hill, and I am a wife and mother residing in Mount Sterling. I am here today to urge you to restore the Governor's budget proposal, which included critical investments in child care, maternal and infant health, and early learning.

My husband and I moved to Ohio with our three young children two years ago. My husband was beginning a new job, and the move required resignation from my full-time job of almost five years and loss of all our medical benefits. I began intermittent, contractual work during my children's naptime, knowing that finding another full-time job would not only be difficult, but also require that I thoughtfully weigh the tradeoff between salary and childcare costs. As a family we have struggled not only finding childcare that has the capacity to care for our children, but also the high cost of high quality childcare.

In 2021, when I still had a full-time job, we found out we were expecting twins. With a toddler already in daycare, we were worried about how we would afford to have three kids in childcare. Our childcare provider informed us that she would not have the capacity to take on two infants at that time, nor would we be able to afford the expense of having all our children in childcare. We navigated that stressful time the best we could as my husband had a full-time work-from-home job and cared for one of our infants full-time while the other infant attended daycare with our toddler, and I went to work for the day. We look back on that time and wonder how we got through as two fulltime working parents with three children, three years old and under, when only two of them attended daycare three days a week.

Please let me stress this point: As two full-time working parents, my husband and I could hardly afford to send two out of three children to daycare three days a week.

Now living in Ohio since 2023, I can say that our situation has not changed much regarding finding and affording childcare. Our eldest child is now in kindergarten, but my husband and I still cannot afford to send our twins to daycare full-time. We have patch-worked a solution by hiring three different babysitters to come to our house to care for our two younger children while my husband and I work full-time.

There is no denying that there is a childcare crisis in our state and in our country. I stand by the work and advocacy efforts of Groundwork Ohio as they strive to support working

families with young children. As a working parent with young children, I ask you to consider investing in the following areas:

- Child Care Crisis: RESTORE publicly funded child care eligibility to 160% of FPL and RESTORE the Child Care Choice Voucher program to \$75M in FY26 and \$150M in FY27.
- Economic Stability: RESTORE the proposed refundable Child Tax Credit of up to \$1,000 per child under age 7.
- Home Visiting: RESTORE \$22.5 million in proposed investment in this evidence-based programming.
- Infant & Maternal Mortality: RESTORE the originally proposed infant vitality funds to \$7.5M each fiscal year.
- Medicaid Access for Moms and Babies: RESTORE existing law requiring multi-year continuous Medicaid enrollment for babies ages 0-3 championed by House leaders last budget cycle. STOP restrictions on the use of doula services to Medicaid eligible women.
- Lead Poisoning: RESTORE funding for the Lead Safe Home and Lead Abatement programs within the Ohio Department of Health.
- Tobacco Use: RESTORE funding for prevention programming.
- Early Learning & Literacy: RESTORE requirements to integrate the science of reading in early learning; RESTORE additional funding for the Governor's 3 Imagination Library; RESTORE the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment—the only tool the state has to understand the impact of early childhood experiences for every child.

These policies pay long-term dividends in Ohio's future. Our children are Ohio's future parents, workforce, and voting constituents. It is my hope and prayer that my children will be able to look back and see that their mom advocated and fought on their behalf to give them the best chance at a fruitful and purposeful life. Our children will grow up and see how much the generations before them valued and cared for them based on the actions we take today to give them the best opportunities and the best future. Thank you for your time and commitment to Ohio's children and families!

Sincerely, [Your Name]