



5005 MEADOWS RD, SUITE 200
LAKE OSWEGO, OR 97035

The Honorable Steve Huffman
Senate Health Committee Chairman
Senate Building
1 Capitol Square
Columbus, Ohio 43215

May 13, 2025

RE: KinderCare: Letter of Support Child Care Budget Priorities FY 2026-27

Chair Huffman, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the Senate Health Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on the state's operating budget bill.

On behalf of KinderCare Learning Companies, I am writing to express our appreciation for your leadership in early childhood education (ECE). We appreciate your continued support of high-quality ECE and your recognition of child care as both an immediate workforce development strategy for working parents and a long-term investment in ensuring children enter K–12 ready to learn and thrive.

KinderCare operates 95 high-quality early learning centers and 44 before- and after-school Champions programs across Ohio, serving nearly 12,000 children and employing over 2,000 teachers and staff. We are committed to serving children of all backgrounds and means—nearly 45% of the families we serve rely on Ohio's Publicly Funded Child Care (PFCC) program.

We commend the child care investments included in the House-passed FY 2026–2027 budget and respectfully offer the following continued support for these key initiatives:

- **Continuation and Expansion of the Child Care Choice Voucher Program:**
The need for the \$50 million increase in funding, which raises program support from \$277.85 million to \$327.85 million over the biennium. Expanding eligibility to families earning up to 200% of the federal poverty level (FPL) is a critical step toward improving access to affordable child care. Without this support, thousands of Ohio families may face the difficult choice between paying full price for care, declining raises or promotion, or leaving the workforce entirely.
- **Improvements to the Publicly Funded Child Care (PFCC) Program:**
Although eligibility was not increased beyond the current 145% FPL threshold, we are encouraged by the shift in payment structure to base reimbursement on enrollment rather than attendance. This change will create greater stability for providers and care. Families alike, providing more predictability to PFCC payments.
- **Establishment of the Child Care Cred Program (Tri-Share Model):**
Supporting the proposed \$10 million investment in this public-private cost-sharing initiative, where child care costs are split between employees (40%), employers (40%), and the Ohio Department of Children and Youth (20%). This is a promising opportunity for our KinderCare for Employers team to collaborate with Ohio businesses and help drive meaningful access to employer-supported child care.

These steps along with supporting Governor Dewine's initial proposal to raise the initial income eligibility threshold from 145% to 160% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), and to increase the continued eligibility threshold from



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150% to 300% of the FPL aims to set Ohio up to be proactive in supporting its families and workforce. We have seen many similar initiatives in states like Florida, Montana, and North Dakota where they have made significant investments into their child care system to better support the growth of their state.

Thank you for recognizing the importance of high quality ECE Please consider KinderCare a committed partner to expanding access to quality, affordable ECE programs throughout Ohio. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at: Austin.Railey@KinderCare.com

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Austin Railey III', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Austin Railey III
Government Relations Representative
KinderCare Learning Companies