

Testimony on HB 96



children's
defense fund
ohio

Testimony before the Senate Health Committee Concerning Childcare

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Brianna Booker, Policy Associate
Children's Defense Fund Ohio

Testimony as an interested party regarding the proposed executive budget

Good afternoon, Chair Huffman, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding H.B. 96, Ohio's state budget for fiscal years 2026-2027. My name is Brianna Booker, and I am the policy associate for the Children's Defense Fund- Ohio. We are a statewide, multi-issue, child advocacy organization that has worked on behalf of children, young people, and families in Ohio for forty-three years. Our mission is to build a community so that young people grow up with dignity, hope, and joy.

I am here to speak as an interested party, requesting an increase in eligibility for publicly funded childcare.

While speaking before the House about the need to expand support for families who cannot afford childcare, I shared a story from a focus group our organization held back in March. In that session, a young mother of two explained that finding reputable, affordable, available, and adequately staffed childcare has been one of her greatest challenges. Her story is not just that of one individual; her story is the story of Ohio, which currently has the third lowest in the nation for eligibility for Publicly Funded Child Care in the United States for children ages 0 to 5.¹

I come before you once more on her behalf, and behalf of families like hers, urging expansion of publicly funded childcare eligibility to those earning up to 300% of the federal poverty line.

¹ [Ohio's childcare crisis, 2025 - Policy Matters Ohio](#)

Average Annual Cost of Childcare in Ohio

By amount and age of children

# of Children	Infant	4-year-old
1	\$17,071	\$13,426
2	\$34,142	\$26,852
3	\$51,213	\$40,278
4	\$68,284	\$53,704
5	\$85,355	\$67,130
6	\$102,426	\$80,556
7	\$119,497	\$93,982
8	\$136,568	\$107,408

Table: CDF-Ohio • Source: Economic Policy Institute • Created with Datawrapper

Currently, in the state of Ohio, the average family would have to spend more than 30% of its income on childcare for just an infant and a 4-year-old.² Increasing eligibility would not only make childcare more accessible to these families, but it would also improve the quality of life for all Ohioans. This investment is both fiscally wise and socially responsible. Studies have shown that increasing access to Publicly Funded Child Care positively impacts workforce participation, family stability, maternal well-being, economic mobility, and early childhood development.³ Increasing access to affordable childcare may also have long-term economic benefits, including ridding the state of a \$5.48 billion loss in tax revenue and employer costs caused each year by “childcare-related employee turnover and absenteeism.”⁴

To increase access to and improve the impact of childcare in Ohio, we recommend the following policies:

- **Cap co-pays** for families receiving Publicly Funded Child Care (PFCC) at **7% of household income**.
- **Reimburse childcare providers at the 75th percentile of market rates** to promote sustainability and ensure quality care.
- **Rescind the Department of Children and Youth waiver** that allows reimbursement based on attendance rather than enrollment, aligning Ohio with federal requirements set by the Administration for Children and Families (KIDCD44).

² [Child care costs in the United States | Economic Policy Institute](#)

³ [The Impact of Publicly Funded Childcare on Parental Well-Being: Evidence from Cut-Off Rules - PMC](#)

⁴ <https://www.scribd.com/document/845214909/U-S-Chamber-Foundation-report-on-the-cost-of-child-care-in-Ohio>

- **Adopt a funding model** based on the **true cost of care**, including a **\$20/hour minimum wage** for childcare workers.

Conclusion

84% of Ohioans, including 77% of Republicans, 84% of Independents, and 92% of Democrats, agree that there needs to be an increase in the “accessibility, affordability, and quality of childcare in the state.”⁵ Our request to increase initial eligibility for publicly funded childcare to 300% of the federal poverty line isn’t party-specific; it is *people-specific*. Affordable childcare should not be a luxury; it should be standard. Again, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding this important issue. At this time, I am happy to answer any questions the committee may have.

⁵ [d114b9_86bd1eead4214e01bbf3c8224b086a19.pdf](#)

