



Interested Party Testimony Regarding HB 64

Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chair Coley, Ranking Minority Member Skindell and members of the Senate Finance Committee, I am Brandi Slaughter, the Chief Operating Officer for Voices for Ohio's Children. Thank you for the opportunity to testify as an interested party in regards to House Bill 64.

Voices for Ohio's Children advocates for policies that maximize a child's life chances by ensuring children are safe, healthy, educated, connected, and employable. Our vision is for children's interests to be at the top of every community's agenda. Voices helps ensure that the needs of Ohio's 3 million children are prioritized at the local, state and federal levels. Our advocacy plays a big role in educating and influencing the community and public officials about sound public policies that help children succeed.

First, on behalf of Voices for Ohio's Children, I would like to thank members of the Ohio Senate for restoring Medicaid coverage for pregnant women in the Senate's substitute version of HB 64. The adoption of this policy will help to guarantee that pregnant women in Ohio have the ability to access the vital prenatal services that help prevent negative birth and health outcomes for infants in our state. We appreciate the efforts of members of the General Assembly as well as the Kasich Administration for their good faith efforts to address this issue in HB 64.

Next, I ask to you to stop for a second. Think back to your teenage years. Think back to the caring adults that invested in your life—that person that took time with you besides your parents or teachers. Maybe it was an educator, like Senator Gardner or Senator Sawyer. Perhaps someone encouraged you, Senator LaRose to enlist in the Army and eventually become a Green Beret? For my 14 year old son, it's his Scoutmaster. We don't "arrive" by ourselves. There are many that contribute to our development.

One person that absolutely changed my life was Barbara Burke. Ms. Burke was a school counselor, but led a gifted and talented program for young girls afterschool. My mother was a teen mother, single parent of three who moved to Columbus from the coal mining country of Logan, WV to obtain employment to care for us. New to Columbus, I talked with a twang and dressed funny. I was often teased by other kids. But Ms. Burke saw more. She saw a bright student. She invested into my success. She paid for piano lessons and other exposure activities. One day, she took the girls of the gifted and talented program on a field trip to a local private school. I was pulled out of the group

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and was tested for admission. I was admitted to the school on a full scholarship. For me, a country girl that moved to Columbus' inner city, this absolutely changed my life. This exposure, much different than what I experienced daily in Columbus' near east side, drove me to excel and achieve. All because of one person, a caring adult, saw more and did more with me through an afterschool program.

Afterschool programs keep kids safe, inspire learning and help working families. Afterschool programs offer access to caring adults for youth who would otherwise be home alone and unsupervised. Learning also happens in communities outside of classrooms. Research shows that high quality afterschool programs can lead to increased attendance, behavior and improved coursework--critical factors to student engagement and achievement. Afterschool programs compliment and support the education system.

High-quality afterschool programming leverages hands-on learning experiences and community connections to prepare youth for success in college and the workforce. It accomplishes this by raising college and career aspirations and readiness. Afterschool programs inspire youth – especially disadvantaged youth – to more actively engage in their learning and reach for higher goals. Recent research demonstrates how essential these attitudes are to quality of work later in life. Additionally, afterschool and summer learning programs targeted to low-income students can help close the achievement gap that has been attributed, at least in part, to cumulative learning loss during the summers.

Despite all we know about the benefits of afterschool programs, most children are missing out. Meeting the need for quality afterschool programs will take a commitment from more than a single funder, funding stream or even sector. It will require significant public investment and systems change at every level—local, state and federal.

Ohio has no dedicated funding source for afterschool programs. As such, Voices proposes a state investment of \$5 million over the biennium to create a state funding stream to fund competitive grants for afterschool and summer learning programs that primarily serves youth in families at or below 200% of the federal poverty line.

Afterschool and summer learning programs help build safer, stronger and smarter children and communities. Simply put, afterschool programs keep kids from falling through the cracks. Thank you for all that you do to keep children safe, healthy, educated, connected, and employable. I know that

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Ms. Burke would be proud of the person I have become. Given my life experience, statistics surely predicted otherwise. I would be happy to answer any questions that you have at this time.

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