

**Ohio House of Representatives**  
**Families, Aging & Human Services Committee**  
**House Bill 145**  
**Marie Willins**  
**4/13/2021**

Chairman Manchester, Vice Chair Cutrona, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the committee, my name is Marie Willins and I am providing testimony today on my own behalf as an early childhood care and education professional. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on House Bill 145, which would expand access to publicly funded child care.

If we want families to work, they must know that their child is in a safe, nurturing environment. Unfortunately, many Ohio families are being denied the chance to succeed at work and become self-sufficient because they cannot afford quality child care or it's just not available.

I worked with a family who was in the process of moving up in to a management position at the fast food restaurant, where she started as a cashier. This meager bump in income made her ineligible for PFCC for her two girls. This meant an increase in her out of pocket cost per week in child care, going from her copay of \$65 to over \$450 for her toddler and preschooler. Due to this drastic increase in out of pocket expense, she needed to pull her girls out of a high quality child care center and rely on family to provide care. She quickly felt the pinch of lack of reliable care and regression of the girls' learning. She had to make the choice to stop her career trajectory and step back down at her restaurant. This expanded access proposed would have prevented that from happening. Child care is essential to keeping our families, businesses, and communities running. As we move into the recovery period of the COVID-19 pandemic, access to quality, affordable child care is necessary to our short- and long-term recovery.

As it stands now, Ohio's eligibility rate ranks among the lowest in the country, tying at number 48 with Nevada and Nebraska. This means that a working single mother with two young children can only qualify for publicly funded child care if she is making less than \$28,236 (\$13.57 per hour) annually. Expanding to 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) would allow a single mother making less than \$43,400 (\$20.88/hour) annually to have access to affordable, quality child care without spending nearly 40% of her income on child care, which is currently estimated at over \$16,000 per year for two young children who do not qualify for publicly funded child care. It is also worth noting that even with the modest increase provided in the as-introduced version of the state biennial budget (HB 110) to 138% of the FPL, Ohio would only move one ahead of Nevada and Nebraska, as the majority of states currently have an eligibility rate higher than 150% of the FPL.

**For all the reasons stated above, I am respectfully urging you to consider expanding initial eligibility for the publicly funded child care subsidy from 130% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) to 200% of the FPL as provided in HB 145.** The pandemic has made clear now more than ever that if we want to have a thriving economy, we need increased access to quality child care so that parents and caregivers can return to work and stay on the job. Now is the time for us to double down on our commitment to Ohio's youngest and most vulnerable children, as well as the families who support them. The Ohio General Assembly has the opportunity to keep Ohioans working and businesses operating, help families break out of poverty,

and ensure more Ohio children have access to high-quality early learning by expanding access to quality and affordable child care.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony today and please do not hesitate to reach out to me directly if you have any questions.