



Ohio House of Representatives  
Families, Aging & Human Services  
House Bill 145  
Katie Kelly, Executive Director  
PRE4CLE  
April 15, 2021

Chairwoman Manchester, Vice Chair Cutrona, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the Families, Aging and Human Services Committee,

My name is Katie Kelly, and I serve as the Executive Director for PRE4CLE. I write as a proponent of HB 145.

PRE4CLE is part of *Cleveland's Plan for Transforming Schools* that is reinventing public education in the City of Cleveland. High-quality preschool is the first step on the education continuum for transforming Cleveland's schools, providing a strong foundation for K-12 success and leading to increased high school graduation and higher education participation rates.

The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare many of the weaknesses in our early education system, leaving us with an opportunity to build a newly resilient system that offers greater access to reliable, affordable high-quality care and education to children and their families as parents head back to work.

**Right now, only two states have child care eligibility levels lower than Ohio.** To put that into real numbers, this means a family of four with a household income of \$35,360 annually would not qualify for assistance. A single mom with one child who finds a job paying \$11 an hour also would not qualify. At \$22,880 annually she makes too much. For many families, the cost of quality child care puts it woefully out of reach. We know, for example, in Cuyahoga County, full-time child care costs between \$10,000 and \$15,000 per year, per child. There is clear evidence of the consequences for Ohio's workforce and economy: national studies show that lack of affordable child care greatly decreases parents' productivity, including forcing some parents to quit or decrease work hours, pass up promotions, and miss work. In 2016, 75,669 Ohio parents quit a job, did not take a job, or greatly changed their job because of child care problems.

We know the pandemic was even worse for parents as data nationwide show that more than 2/3 of families had to change their child care arrangements and more than 2.4 million women, and 1.8 men, exited the workforce in the last year. As we fight to emerge from this pandemic, we should be aiding parents in their desire to return to work, not creating roadblocks. We can do this by ensuring children have access to safe, affordable, high-quality early care and education environments.

This investment pays off for both Ohio's current workforce and for our future workforce because children who attend high-quality early educations are more likely to be ready for kindergarten, graduate high school, earn more, and have better overall health.

Just as parents need roads and bridges to go to work, they also need affordable high-quality child care. We urge you to favorably recommend this bill for passage. Thank you for your time, and I would be happy to answer any questions at any time.