

Little Miracles
Early Development Center
4445 Reinbeau Drive
Columbus, OH 43232
614. 837.4564 (f) 614.920.3151



**Ohio House of Representatives
Families, Aging & Human Services Committee
House Bill 145
Malissa Harris
Little Miracles EDC**

Chairman Manchester, Vice Chair Cutrona, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the committee, my name is Malissa Harris and I am the Education Specialist at Little Miracles Early Development Center, a 4-star rated center in South East Columbus.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on House Bill 145, which would expand access to publicly funded child care.

I am an early childhood educator but first, I am a mom. I have three children who need childcare. I was offered a raise from my job and of course, my first thought is I could lose my publicly funded child care benefits. My second thought is my family needs this money but I wouldn't be able to afford paying for quality child care. What do you do in this moment, as mom and as a worker? In my case, I took the raise with a higher copay but there are many families that aren't able to pay the higher copay. We want to increase the number of women in the workforce but how can we do that if we can't take a pay raise. The pay raise that could help bring a family out of poverty.

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.