



House Bill 145 Proponent Testimony
House Families, Aging & Human Services Committee
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Good morning, Chairwoman Manchester, Vice Chair Cutrona, Ranking Member Liston and members of the House Families, Aging and Human Services Committee, my name is Stephanie Keinath and I'm the Vice President of the Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce. I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 145 today. As the leading voice of business in the Dayton region, the Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce represents over 2200 members across nine counties in southwest Ohio. For our members, and the business community as a whole, access to high quality child care is a critical workforce issue.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated an already precarious situation for Ohio's businesses, and we're hearing from our members on a daily basis how challenging it continues to be to recruit and retain the workforce that they need. By making more workers eligible for help paying for child care, the State of Ohio can provide critical supports to working families so that they can keep working or return to the workforce.

We know that the current eligibility threshold for publicly funded child care in Ohio is 130% of the federal poverty level. This means that a mom with two kids needs to make less than \$28,000 a year in order to qualify for any child care assistance. This is too low, and forces too many parents, and moms in particular, to choose between entering and staying in the workforce, and securing quality child care for their families.

House Bill 145 proposes a bold new vision for expanding child care eligibility in Ohio, and the stakes couldn't be higher. I urge you not only to consider the impacts on our current workforce, but also the long-term impacts on our workforce of the future. All the data around early-childhood education demonstrate how critical investments in quality child care during the early years of a child's life equals better performance in school and stronger connections to future careers.

In addition to the need for eligibility expansion for publicly funded child care in Ohio, I also wanted to take a moment to underscore the need to increase reimbursement rates for child care providers in Ohio. The margins for child care businesses are razor thin, and the pandemic-19 pandemic has demonstrated that each and every child care seat in Ohio is critical- we can't afford to lose anymore.

I commend Representative White and Representative Lightbody for taking up this important issue, and I look forward to working with them as we continue to champion the critical connection between high quality child care and workforce development for Ohio's businesses.