



**Ohio House of Representatives  
Families, Aging & Human Services Committee  
House Bill 145  
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Early Childhood Education Alliance  
April 8, 2021**

Chairman Manchester, Vice Chair Cutrona, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the committee, my name is Liz Hibbs and I am the Director of the Early Childhood Education Alliance. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on House Bill 145, which would expand access to publicly funded child care.

As a community leader and SPARK home visiting educational provider, I firmly believe that quality early child care and education is a critical part of our nation's infrastructure. It must be prioritized as such, and I believe House Bill 145 is a good start. Early childhood education and care is the cornerstone of our society and all of its functions. Businesses depend on employees, and employees need to know that their children are in a safe, nurturing environment. Unfortunately, many Ohio families cannot afford quality child care or it isn't available to them.

As a parent, I can speak to the lack of affordable child care in Ohio. My two daughters are now 11 and 14. When they were young, I had to use my entire retirement savings to pay for their child care and early childhood education. I am now working to rebuild my retirement savings, and don't know if I will have enough money to ever retire. If I had to do it again, I would—but shouldn't have to do so while living in one of the richest nations in the world.

My children's care, well being, health, and education come first—as it should. Investing in quality early childhood education and care is a shrewd business decision and economic investment. Research shows that investments in quality early childhood care and education yield a 13% return on investment. Children who have received a quality early childhood education are more likely to graduate from high school, avoid teen pregnancy, and go on to acquire a college education or become skilled in a trade. This boosts the economy and creates better citizens. If Ohio invests in its people, the people of Ohio will in turn invest in Ohio. House Bill 145 must pass.

House Bill 145 isn't a partisan issue. More than 3 out of 4 voters support substantial investments in quality early learning for Ohio's children. Only 41% of Ohio children come to kindergarten ready to learn. The pandemic and COVID have compounded this problem, as more than 12.2 million women nationwide have lost their jobs and more than 4.6 million of them have not returned to work. In addition, access to affordable early childhood care and education has diminished. Single parents have been forced to decide between keeping a roof over their family's heads or ensuring that their children are properly cared for during one of the worst times in our nation's history since the Great Depression. Access to affordable and quality child care is necessary for our short term 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.

Sincerely,

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