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House Families, Aging & Human Services Committee

Testimony on House Bill 145

Lisa A. Gray, President, Ohio Excels
April 15, 2021

Chair Manchester, Vice Chair Cutrona, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the House Families, Aging & Human Services committee, my name is Lisa Gray, and I am the president of Ohio Excels – a non-partisan, non-profit organization created by leaders of Ohio's business community committed to helping improve educational outcomes for Ohio's students. Ohio Excels' focus on education includes early childhood, K-12, and postsecondary education experiences. Part of our early childhood focus is advocating for lower barriers for families seeking quality early childhood education, including financial barriers. House Bill 145 (HB 145) will provide an opportunity for many more Ohio families to access quality early education experiences for their children.

Ohio families saw significant disruptions in their ability to access high-quality early childhood education providers over the course of the pandemic. These disruptions prevented some families, especially women, from being able to participate in the workforce. HB 145 would expand initial childcare eligibility from 130% of the Federal Poverty Level to 200%, which would support a family of three making \$43,440 or less. Expanding childcare eligibility to 200% of the Federal Poverty Level will allow more Ohioans to not only return to work, but also help ensure more children are prepared for kindergarten and long-term educational success.

Studies have shown that every \$1 invested in early childhood yields a \$4 to \$16 return on investment. This substantial return on investment makes it evident that increasing the eligibility to 200% is a smart policy investment. In addition to allowing more parents to participate in the workforce and the immediate educational benefits, children in quality early education have fewer behavioral problems including involvement in our criminal justice system. We also see positive improvements in children's physical and mental health. Increasing eligibility will also increase enrollment for childcare providers, many of whom were devastated during the pandemic and had to liquidate assets, cut staff, take on debt, or even close.

Ohio Excels urges the committee to support HB 145. Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, I can be reached at LisaGray@OhioExcels.org.