



**Ohio House of Representatives  
Families, Aging & Human Services Committee  
House Bill 145  
Robyn Lightcap  
April 15, 2021**

Chairman Manchester, Vice Chair Cutrona, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the Committee, my name is Robyn Lightcap, and I am the Executive Director of Preschool Promise, Inc. in Dayton/Montgomery County. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 145, which would expand eligibility for Publicly Funded Child Care.

I'm grateful that our elected officials in Montgomery County and the City of Dayton have dedicated local public dollars to help more children attend high-quality preschool. With this local investment we have provided tuition assistance to working families who make too much to qualify for the Ohio's Publicly Funded Child Care. However, at a local level we can only afford to do this for Montgomery County 4-year-olds attending preschool. We cannot meet the needs of all families and all children in our County and across Ohio without state and federal investment.

As you consider House Bill 145 and the request to increase the eligibility threshold for Ohio's Publicly Funded Child Care (PFCC) program, I'd ask you to consider these two real-life stories. These two examples illustrate just how broken our child care system is and how incredibly desperate working families are.

The current cut-off to receive PFCC for a working mother with two children is \$13.73/hour. One mom shared that in order to remain eligible for PFCC assistance for her two children, she was forced to call off from work one day every week to suppress her weekly pay. That's the only way she would remain below Ohio's tremendously restrictive PFCC eligibility standard — she had to earn less than \$550/week — or under \$28,548 annually.

If she lost her subsidy, she couldn't possibly afford private-pay child care — which was \$220/week or over \$11,000 a year for one child at her provider.

Of course, this work habit understandably frustrated her employer. Because of her repeated absences, she was put on a less desirable shift that required her to work until 7 p.m. — but her child care program closed at 6 o'clock.

She had no choice but to quit. She looked for another position and was offered employment at a warehouse. But she would have been required to work Saturdays and Sundays. Her child care center isn't open on weekends.



# preschool PROMISE

Another mom who reached out for our help is supporting two children. Today she has a job as a peer counselor at a drug rehabilitation program and earns \$15.12/ hour. She wants to go back to school and earn a counseling degree — so she can move ahead and earn a living wage.

But child care costs are overwhelming for her 7- and 10-year-old boys.

During COVID when their school was closed, she needed full-time child care — not just afterschool care.

Her provider had to raise its prices because the center was limited in the number of children it could enroll under Ohio's pandemic safety protocols. Mom's cost suddenly went from \$65/ week per child for afterschool care to \$200/ week per child — which is \$19,200 a year for both of her children.

Keep in mind that with her last 12-cent per-hour raise, mom grosses — grosses, not nets — under \$31,500 per year. She couldn't possibly have afforded to spend two-thirds of her gross income on child care.

How did she make it?

Her elderly father stepped in. He also is taking care of the boys now that school is back in session. But he's not able physically to take full-time responsibility this summer.

These two hard-working moms are trying to be great parents, they're willing to work, they don't want to depend on government.

But how in the world are they expected to survive?

There are thousands of other Ohio mothers in just this same predicament.

Ohio's PFCC eligibility standard is pushing them out of the workforce; we're forcing them to depend on expensive government assistance, including everything from SNAP food programs, to housing subsidies, to Medicaid, to utility assistance.

There has to be a less expensive and smarter way to support families.

It starts with raising Ohio's Publicly Funded Child Care eligibility standard to 200% of the Federal Poverty Level so it is feasible for parents to work and become self-sufficient. The Federal funding from the CARES Act and the American Rescue Plan provides more than enough funding to cover this increase. Now is the time to support children and their working parents as we recover from COVID.