



Child Care Choices

“Your Link to Community Child Care and Early Childhood Education Resources”

Ohio House of Representatives
Families, Aging & Human Services Committee
House Bill 145
Renee Matsunami
Child Care Choices, Inc.
April 12, 2021

Co-Directors
Jenny Fox
Renee Matsunami

Food Program
Linda Herrmann
Susan Hoke

Board Members

Ann Baird
Rick Baker
Cheryl Buecker
Danese Christmas
Andie Doller
Sonia Ewald
Marilyn Fennell
Katie Gascho
Hillary Jaqua
Kate K. Johnsen
Carol Myers
Barbara Ruland
Elizabeth Russ
Elizabeth Studebaker

Story Lady

Robin Bartley
Cynthia Dillard

Trainings

Karen Stienecker

Chairman Manchester, Vice Chair Cutrona, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the committee:

My name is Renee Matsunami; I am Co-Director at Child Care Choices, a small nonprofit child care resource and referral agency in Miami County. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on House Bill 145, which would expand access to publicly funded child care.

The early childhood years are crucial for brain development, as a baby’s brain doubles in size during the first year and reaches 90% of growth **before** Kindergarten. The quality of a child’s experiences during the birth to five years helps shape brain development, vitally impacting later success in school and life. Poverty and lack of access to quality early learning experiences can negatively impact a child’s early brain development, and subsequently, their long-term success and productivity as a citizen in our community. A child’s relationships with the adults in their life - parents, family, child care providers and teachers, are the most important influences on their brain development. Nurturing, responsive, dependable adults are essential to a child’s healthy development.

Investment in high-quality early childhood education for Ohio’s most at-risk children during the most important period of their development has a positive long-term impact, delivering up to a 13% return on investments per year. Unfortunately, many Ohio families are unable to afford this critical foundation of learning, or the availability of quality childcare is limited or non-existent. In Miami County alone, we lost over 100 child care spaces during the pandemic.

It is immeasurably important that families are able to afford child care, so that they can enter/reenter the workforce with the knowledge that their children are safe, healthy and well-cared for. Currently, Ohio’s eligibility rate ranks among the lowest in the country, tying at number 48 with Nevada and Nebraska. With this metric, 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.

4817 State Route 202, Tipp City, OH 45371 Phone: 937-667-1799
Email: childcarechoices@outlook.com FAX 937-669-5469
child-care-choices.org



A United Way Agency

Child Care Choices

“Your Link to Community Child Care and Early Childhood Education Resources”

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. Even with a modest increase to 138% as introduced in the state biennial budget (HB 110), Ohio would still fall behind the majority of states which currently have an eligibility rate higher than 150% of the FPL.

Please, 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. Every day we see and hear stories of the devastating impact that the pandemic has had on families and it is evident that now more than ever we need increased access to quality child care so that parents and caregivers can return to their jobs and be a part of a dependable, consistent, reliable and productive workforce. Now is the time for us to make a 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,

Renee Matsunami

Renee Matsunami
Co-Director

4817 State Route 202, Tipp City, OH 45371 Phone: 937-667-1799
Email: childcarechoices@outlook.com FAX 937-669-5469
child-care-choices.org

