

**Ohio House of Representatives
Families, Aging & Human Services Committee
House Bill 145
John Haley
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Chairman Manchester, Vice Chair Cutrona, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the committee, my name is John Haley, and I am Chief Executive Officer of Gosiger, Inc., a manufacturer and distributor of computer-controlled machine tools and factory automation systems, in Dayton. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on House Bill 145, which would expand access to publicly funded child care.

As we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, we have to help more parents get back to work. While paying for and finding quality child care is difficult for middle- and high-income parents, it's too often an overwhelming, if not impossible, challenge for working low-income families.

These employees, many of them women, aren't just trying to make a living and get ahead — they're providing critical services at nursing homes, hospitals and grocery stores and for every business with entry-level (but wholly necessary) jobs.

In Dayton and Montgomery County, our City and County have stepped up to make child care and preschool programs more affordable and high quality. But local governments and local businesses can't improve a broken child care system on our own. We need the State's help — particularly support for Ohio's woefully underfunded Publicly Funded Child Care program. The infusion of pandemic support Ohio is receiving from the federal government is an opportunity to make long overdue improvements.

Currently, only those families earning less than 130% of the Federal Poverty Level are eligible for this supportive program that encourages parents to work and become financially independent. This means that a mother of two children can't earn more than \$13.73 per hour— which translates to an annual salary of \$28,548.

Mothers are not magicians. They can't possibly feed, clothe and house two children AND also pay for full-time child care on such a meager salary.

Only two other states — Indiana and Alabama — have a lower eligibility threshold for families needing this help. Ohio can do better.

I'm aware that Gov. DeWine is proposing to raise the income eligibility to 138% of the Federal Poverty Level. If that change is adopted, a mother of two could earn up to \$14.57 per hour before being denied benefits.

That's a move in the right direction, but I would argue that 150% of the Federal Poverty Level is a better threshold. That adjustment would mean an additional 14,000 kids would be eligible statewide. In the

Dayton community, another 1,100 children would benefit, and an estimated 900 workers would be less likely to drop out of the workforce.

In Montgomery County, we are particularly proud of the commitment of our child care programs and preschools to Ohio's bold *Step Up to Quality* initiative. The State is on a path to improving early learning programs all across Ohio — and we can't abandon this initiative, which incentivizes quality.

Eliminating *Step Up to Quality* or walking it back would result in programs being less likely and less able to provide truly quality programming. As a taxpayer and business leader, I want us to invest in building babies' brains — not babysitting.

While we still have a long way to go under *Step Up to Quality* to pay child care teachers respectable wages and fund the system, we're moving in the right direction to provide high quality early learning and teaching.

High quality programs ensure more children start school on track, not behind. And early learning provides the foundation for children to succeed first in school and later on the job. If we really care about using taxpayers' dollars wisely and are committed to earning a return on our investment, we cannot take money away from *Step Up to Quality*.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my testimony and for the truly difficult work you do on behalf of Ohio's children and families.

Regards,



John Haley
CEO