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**Ohio House of Representatives
Finance Committee
Written Testimony on Substitute House Bill 33**

**Patricia Gleason, COO, Learning Grove
April 19, 2023**

Chair Edwards, Vice Chair LaRe, Ranking Member Sweeney and members of the Finance Committee, my name is Patricia Gleason and I am the Chief Operating Officer of Learning Grove. We are grateful to be able to provide written testimony on Substitute House Bill 33, Ohio's FY 2024-25 budget bill specifically as it relates to the publicly funded child care program administered by the Department of Job & Family Services (ODJFS).

Ohio's child care providers are in crisis. Learning Grove has closed six of the twenty centers we operate. Without additional state funding for child care, programs across the state face the same challenges we do. We beg this Committee to restore the \$150 million in state ARPA funds proposed by Governor DeWine for child care scholarships, as well as invest \$75 million in general revenue funds for child care stabilization grants (amendment HC1403). Ohioans cannot go back to work without access to child care. This budget recommends hundreds of millions of dollars to support various occupations, yet fails to support the child care workforce which is essential to allowing all other workers to do their jobs. Child care cannot be ignored in this budget.

We support the inclusion of the Department of Children and Youth and the increase in publicly funded child care eligibility in the Substitute House Bill. But that is not sufficient to support an effective state child care subsidy program.

Learning Grove is a key provider of child care and early learning programs in Southwest Ohio and Northern Kentucky. It is the merger of two of the most respected child care providers in both our states. Cincinnati Early Learning Centers and Children, Inc. were both well known for delivering an outstanding level of early education. Thirteen months ago these two highly acclaimed organizations joined efforts, combining strengths under a new name: Learning Grove.

We serve a racially and socioeconomically diverse population of nearly 7,000 children, youth, and families annually with programs across our region. Our partnership allowed our organization to move further faster and combine resources to support youth, parents, and educators more effectively. It increased our ability to nurture lifelong successes for children and students, families, professionals, and the community.

We believe all children deserve to be nurtured through high-quality education, to think critically, get along with others, and set the path toward a productive future. To help realize these experiences, we never compromise on practices and programs that are best for children. Extraordinarily dedicated women and men innovate and advocate for our children, parents, and

community. We provide the highest quality education for each child and work to support their parents and caregivers. Together we transform lives and help build brighter futures. Together we strive for lifelong success.

We see every day the toll that an underfunded child care system takes on working parents struggling to make ends meet, on businesses who can't recruit and retain employees who don't have child care, and on child care workers whose salaries are so low that they qualify for a child care subsidy for their own children.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. Please reach out to me directly if you have questions about our testimony or Ohio's child care system.

Sincerely,
Patti



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