



Mark Johnson
State Representative

Chairman Edwards, Vice Chair LaRe, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the House Finance Committee,

Thank you for hearing sponsor testimony on House Bill 610, which will establish the Child Care Cred Program.

The program is a public/private solution to tackle Ohio's childcare crisis head-on. As many of you know, the high cost of child care in Ohio has become an overwhelming burden for countless families.

On average, child care for an infant and a four-year-old costs a family \$18,277 annually. This financial strain has forced many parents, especially mothers, to reduce their working hours, or leave their jobs entirely to manage childcare responsibilities.

If we want to remain known as a business friendly state we need to address the child care crisis. I feel this is a step in the right direction. This program is not mandatory. Both the employer and the employee have to apply and be approved. The employer also must have more than 1 employee in order to participate.

While Ohio provides publicly funded childcare to families earning up to 130% of the federal poverty level, current state support for child care is inadequate. Additionally, low reimbursement rates for publicly funded care have made it

difficult for childcare providers to sustain their businesses and pay competitive wages to their staff.

This legislation will establish the Child Care Cred Program under The Department of Children and Youth. Under this program, the costs of child care would be shared equally by participating employees, employers, and the department.

The bill allocates \$10 million to the program, which will be distributed on a first-come, first-served basis, and all child care providers offering services must be appropriately licensed or certified under Ohio law.

What piqued my interest in child care was more than two years ago, Steve Stivers and the Ohio Chamber put on a session about the need for child care. It was in my hometown of Chillicothe, where we had deep discussions about how we can provide child care.

Marvin Jones, the CEO of my local Goodwill Center, who was also in the session, and his board took on opening a child care center in Chillicothe, the first Goodwill to do that. They have worked to eliminate barriers to employment and now, as a legislature, we need to do our part to eliminate barriers for families.

I believe this is a solution that works, is business-friendly, and helps solve the problem. I'll be the first to admit this isn't a silver bullet to fix all child care issues, but House Bill 610 will help stabilize the child care providers who are struggling right now.

Senate Bill 273, the companion bill to this legislation had its first hearing last week. I hope we can move forward with this legislation to build a strong partnership between our families and businesses.

Again, thank you for bringing this bill forward for consideration. I will take any questions you may have.