



Ohio Association for the Education of Young Children

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Health Committee

House Bill 110

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Ohio Association for the Education of Young Children (Ohio AEYC)

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Chairman Huffman and members of the committee, my name is Kimberly Tice and I am the Executive Director of the Ohio Association for the Education of Young Children. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 110, which would expand initial child care eligibility from 130% of the Federal Poverty Level to 150% of the Federal Poverty Level.

Ohio AEYC is a statewide, professional association with a mission to empower all who care for educate and advocate on behalf of young children. We are the state affiliate for NAEYC, the largest and most respected professional association for early childhood educators in the country. We explicitly represent over 2,000 members serving in all early childhood roles and settings while also supporting the entire early childhood profession across Ohio.

Ohio AEYC and its members believe every child deserves an equal opportunity to a high-quality educational foundation that prepares them to grow, learn and succeed in both school and life. Your investment in child care supports our efforts to deliver on the promise of early childhood education.

Ohio AEYC is testifying today as an interested party to House Bill 110 to urge you to increase initial eligibility for publicly funded child care to 150% of the Federal Poverty Level. This will directly help families to afford care and indirectly help child care program in their efforts to increase enrollment if more families can enroll or continue to use care.

Everyone should have the opportunity to work hard and achieve family economic security. Hard work should also be rewarded, but some policies are insufficient and inadvertently keep hard-working parents from climbing the economic ladder. Increasing eligibility to 150% of the Federal Poverty level would ensure a family of three making \$32,580 annually or \$15.66/hour or less is eligible or can maintain their eligibility for child care assistance.

Almost half of early childhood educators rely on some form of public assistance due to the lack of a living wage. In Ohio, the average hourly wage is \$24.65, while early childhood educators earn only \$10.67 per hr. despite being identified as “heroes” and essential workers during the pandemic. In a recent conversation with center directors, one director shared (and others agreed) that she has an outstanding teacher who has consistently refused a raise because she would then lose child care assistance for her own preschool child. While most of us would never turn down a raise, the hourly increase would not be enough for her family to pay child care tuition, yet would be slightly too much to continue receiving child care assistance. Increasing the eligibility level would allow teachers and other working parents to take pride in earning an increase in compensation without fear of jeopardizing their family’s child care eligibility.

Increasing eligibility is money well spent.

- It is a two-generational support for both working parents and their children. Parents can work toward economic sufficiency while their children receive safe, enriching learning experiences.
- Providing more families with the opportunity to access affordable child care can help prevent child abuse and neglect by reducing parental stress.
- When parents can’t afford the full cost of unsubsidized child care, they often choose unregulated care that in some situations is not as safe for the child.
- Ohio is still serving only a fraction of eligible children, and parents still struggle to pay for the cost of child care. The FY22-23 executive budget proposal includes a small increase in eligibility from 130% FPL to 138% FPL. To make meaningful progress on eligibility in the state of Ohio, initial eligibility must be increased to 150% FPL to provide much needed relief to working families.

Children and families can’t wait.

Devin Still, Care Advocate and former defensive end for the Cincinnati Bengals was recently asked to end his speech with some motivational words for caregivers and families. Devin stated that “Caregivers are tired of being asked to be motivated by words. They want to be motivated by actions.” Ohio AEYC and our members ask that you take his words to heart and take action to raise the eligibility level for Ohio’s hard-working families and their children.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and Ohio AEYC asks you to contact us if you have questions or concerns. We are happy to be utilized as a resource and to connect you directly to early childhood educators and families in your district who stand ready to share first-hand experiences with you related to this testimony.