



House Bill 110
Ohio Senate Health Committee
May 4, 2021
Stephanie Keinath, Vice President
Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce

Good afternoon Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the committee, my name is Stephanie Keinath and I'm the Vice President of the Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce. I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in support of the expansion of publically funded childcare in House Bill 110 today. As the leading voice of business in the Dayton region, the Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce represents over 2200 members across nine counties in southwest Ohio. For our members, and the business community as a whole, access to high quality child care is a critical workforce issue.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated an already precarious situation for Ohio's businesses, and we're hearing from our members on a daily basis how challenging it continues to be to recruit and retain the workforce that they need. By making more workers eligible for help paying for child care, the State of Ohio can provide critical supports to working families so that they can keep working or return to the workforce.

We know that the current eligibility threshold for publicly funded child care in Ohio is 130% of the federal poverty level. This means that a mom with two kids needs to make less than \$28,000 a year in order to qualify for any child care assistance. This is too low, and forces too many parents, and moms in particular, to choose between entering and staying in the workforce, and securing quality child care for their families.

House Bill 110 proposes the expansion of child care eligibility to 138% of the federal poverty level in Ohio, however, those of us here today representing the business and early-childhood education communities believe we must go further in order to help Ohio's families return to work and stay working. The stakes couldn't be higher. By expanding eligibility for publicly funded child care to 150% of the federal poverty level, (which would support a family of three making \$32,580 annually or less), we can keep Ohio working by helping more parents afford child care and ensuring more children in low-income families have access to high-quality care.

I urge you not only to consider the impacts on our current workforce, but also the long-term impacts on our workforce of the future. All the data around early-childhood education demonstrate how critical investments in quality child care during the early years of a child's life equals better performance in school and stronger connections to future careers. I know each of you make tough decisions everyday about where to invest tax dollars in order to make the biggest impact for the future of Ohio. Increased investment in high quality child care is a win for our families, our businesses and Ohio's economy.