

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE

3/31/2009

Stephanie Kitchen

groundWork Campaign

Good morning Chairman Sykes and members of the House Finance Committee. My name is Stephanie Kitchen from Grove City. I am a Home Health Aide for Abble Home Services. I provide home care services to the elderly and disabled in Franklin County.

My son's name is Benjamin Kitchen, and he turned 4 in January. Ben is hearing impaired, has a speech delay, and a sensory disorder. He is a very happy, and outgoing child, the type who never meets a stranger.

I contacted a caseworker at Ohio Dept. of Job & Family Services in approximately June 2007 to ask about childcare assistance for my son. I had just been given a final warning at work due to my attendance from unreliable child care. Until this time I would have friends or family watch Benjamin but as he grew older it became harder to find someone to watch him consistently, I would often have to call off because childcare plans fell through or be called to come pick him up early for one reason or another. My son's disabilities were beginning to become more prevalent at this time as well so I needed to find reliable, affordable childcare w/ trained, understanding teachers. The receipt of title XX was a godsend. I was able to visit several centers from their list and select one according to Ben's needs.

This past summer I was able to take a class to get a home health certificate for a job change. After years of retail and food service work I was able to get a higher paying, more respected job I could be proud of. I was able to relax in my class knowing my son was safe and happy with teachers he loved and are trained to care for him. In August I passed my test to get my certificate and was able to get a job w/ Abble and get us started on the right path.

If our childcare were to be cut I would more than likely have to quit my job. There is no way I could take an active 4 year old to work with me. With his disabilities he needs a patient, trained caregiver, someone I'm not likely to find in the newspaper.

My son has blossomed while attending state funded childcare. He has learned to play with and care about other children, has mastered potty training to be like the "big boys", and looks forward to seeing his teachers. To take this away from him or any child would be devastating.

Thank you.