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Help Me Grow  
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*Washington County Birth to 3 Services*

Senate Finance and Financial Institute Committee

Regina Glover  
Help Me Grow  
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Good Morning members of the Senate Finance & Financial Institute Committee. My name is Regina Glover and I am a Service Coordinator with Washington County Help Me Grow in Marietta, Ohio. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

Washington County is located in southeastern Ohio. It's rural Appalachia and is one of the largest geographical counties in the state. Resources are limited and many of our families don't have transportation to access the resources available in our county. Help Me Grow is able to serve these families by providing an educational home visiting program that serves families prenatal to age 3 who are AT RISK for or have a developmental delay. These are our most vulnerable children!

One of our dads wanted to be here to speak on behalf of the children we serve, but was unable to due to a family medical emergency. I'd like to take this time to share his letter with you.

Greetings, Senator Stewart;

My name is Mitch Maifeld and I'm a stay-at-home dad in your district. I have a 2.5 year old son with DiGeorge Syndrome who is thriving in Ohio's Help Me Grow program.

It's my understanding that the Senate may drop the \$3.5 million Help Me Grow GRF line item that was in the Executive Budget. I strongly urge you to maintain this funding!

My son Wilson receives Developmental, Speech and Physical Therapies from the Washington County Board of Developmental Disabilities, funded through Help Me Grow. His skills are now approaching the normal level for his age, even though when we moved to Ohio just 1.5 years ago he was quite delayed. The support and encouragement we've received through the Help Me Grow program has helped little Wilson achieve near miracles. See the attached photo.

In this recession, budgets are tight from the household to the federal scale. Everyone everywhere has tough choices to make, including you. In my home, we make those choices based on value. The benefit Help Me

Grow provides to Ohio's youngest children far outweighs the relatively small expenditure. For the cost of a small county road bridge, the state can give a great start to thousands of disabled and at-risk children. These kids could otherwise cost the state orders of magnitude more money in the years to come as they may be more likely to need institutionalization or correctional services.

Puppies and babies always appeal to the constituency at election time. The Humane Society may also contact you, but please remember Ohio's youngest citizens and the impact your choices today will have on their lives.

Invest in Wilson and Ohio's children!

Mitch Maifeld  
Fleming, Ohio

Another family we serve has 2 boys, Carter and Cameron. Cameron was a year old when his mom enrolled him in Help Me Grow. On the 1<sup>st</sup> visit, mom had some concerns with Cameron's speech and eating habits. After guidance from the Service Coordinator, Cameron's eating concerns disappeared within 3 visits and this 2 year old is now speaking in 4-5 word sentences. He would have needed lengthy and expensive therapy sessions if mom's concerns for Cameron weren't addressed at such a young age.

Some of you may be aware that Help Me Grow is losing 72% of our funding due to the loss of TANF funds on July 1, 2009. The 36.5 million that is in the GRF line item of the Executive Budget would still leave our program at a 30% reduction in funding. Also, beginning July 1, 2009 our program guidelines are changing so that we can only enroll prenatal first-time moms under 200% of the Federal Poverty Line with 2 additional risk factors; or a first-time parent with an infant under 6 months under 200% of the Federal Poverty Line with 2 risk factors. Currently, a child can be enrolled at any time up to his/her 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday. Under these new guidelines little Cameron would not have qualified for our program.

I personally have accessed other early childhood programs that are at stake, along with Help Me Grow. I was a teen mom who had my 1st child, Ashley, my senior year of high school. I had my 2<sup>nd</sup> daughter, Miranda when I was 21. I was involved in an extremely abusive relationship and with the help of childcare assistance and my job I was able to afford to move out. I was also involved in other early childhood programs that helped me set goals for my family which empowered me to attend college and receive my social services degree. Ashley is now 15 and Miranda is 12. They are now excelling in school while participating in advanced classes. Without the help and support of these vital Early Care and Educational Systems, I would not be standing before you asking you to please save the Help Me Grow Program and our states most vulnerable population, our children.

Thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions you might have at this time.