



HOUSE PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE

Maureen Boggs

Corporation for Ohio Appalachian Development (COAD)

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Good afternoon Chairman Dyer, ranking member Morgan and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Subcommittee of the Finance and Appropriations Committee. My name is Maureen Boggs and I am the Early Care and Education Division Director at the Corporation for Ohio Appalachian Development (COAD), a coalition of 17 Community Action Agencies serving 30 mostly Appalachian counties. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

Research shows that experiences in early childhood impact a child's entire life. In this challenging budget environment, it is very important to continue recent efforts to build the system of quality early care and education in Ohio.

I ask you today to consider the following:

Research on early care and education and brain development shows:

- A child's environment during the first five years of life can greatly impact the brain's ability to develop.
- 85% of a child's brain is developed by the age of five.
- Young children exposed to high-quality instructional settings exhibit better language and mathematics skills, better social skills and better relationships with classmates than do children in lower-quality care.ⁱ
- According to the Ohio Department of Education, nearly one-third of the 130,000 children entering kindergarten each year are not prepared to succeed.
- In 2006, nearly 8,000 children in kindergarten through third grade were held back a gradeⁱⁱ costing Ohio \$43 million in basic aid funds alone.

We can only achieve the positive outcomes and return on investment by delivering high quality services. And, these services must start before a child enters kindergarten. Ohio has several programs that promote quality within the early care and education system. It is critical that these components be protected in the current budget so that we do not compromise our children's futures.

- Step Up to Quality, Ohio's quality rating system for early childhood centers, requires that programs exceed minimum licensing standards and it rewards quality improvement efforts. In 2008 nearly 45,000 children were served in 455 star rated centers. In 2009, Step Up to Quality is on target to reach the goal of 800 star rated centers. In the COAD region 75 centers are rated: (10) are rated 3 star, the highest rating (inc.8 Head Start programs); (13) are rated 2 star; and (8) are rated 1 star. An additional 114 programs are in process to earn their rating. This initiative enables programs in Appalachian counties to access high quality professional development, developmentally appropriate classroom materials and equipment, and safer playgrounds unlike any other initiative that I've experienced in my 25 plus years in this industry.

- Teacher education is a widely recognized indicator of program quality. Ohio's Teacher Education and Compensation Helps program (TEACH) helps existing early childhood workers to earn a certificate or degree in early childhood education. Currently, 525 providers serving in various ECE settings throughout Ohio are participating TEACH scholars; 39 (7%) of those are from Appalachian Ohio. As Appalachians continue to try to catch up with other regions of the state in attaining higher education degrees, having these resources will enable more ECE personnel to earn college degrees. TEACH provides an opportunity that might otherwise not be available to folks in this industry.

Ohio provides funding for several pre-kindergarten programs, including Early Childhood Education in the public schools, the Early Learning Initiative (ELI), and subsidized child care. However, together with federally-funded Head Start, **only 30 percent of Ohio's low-income children have access to publicly funded early care and education in Ohio.**

The proposed Center for Early Childhood Development is critical in Ohio's effort to maintain a vital early childhood system while also improving quality and efficiency. Additionally, the Center will bring together the work of the School Readiness Solutions Group and the Early Childhood Cabinet and position the entire system to grow and improve as Ohio's economy recovers.

COAD supports:

- **The executive budget proposal to create The Center for Early Childhood Development within the Department of Education.**
- **Maintain current eligibility levels for child care, the Early learning Initiative and Early Childhood Education at 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level, supporting working families and giving Ohio's children a fair start.**

In the 2007-2008 school year Ohio paid for half-day kindergarten for every child, and full-day kindergarten for children in 123 low-income school districts. Districts can also offer full-day kindergarten through local funding. However, few Appalachian school districts have the building capacity, staff and other resources to add full day kindergarten. Research consistently confirms that children who attend full-day kindergarten learn more in reading and math over the kindergarten year than those in half-day programs. Also, parents report higher levels of satisfaction with full day programming. While the Governor's proposal to provide full-day kindergarten in all school districts worries some local administrators, there is a simple solution. Full-day kindergarten classrooms can be housed in community settings, just as the Early Childhood Education program is administered now. All Ohio children, not just some, need every opportunity to learn and thrive.

COAD supports:

- **Including full-day kindergarten in the K-12 reform and financing solution.**
- **Allowing full-day kindergarten classrooms to be housed in high quality community- based child care settings.**

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

ⁱ "Building Blocks for Success: State Efforts in Early Childhood Education." *Education Week*. 2002.

ⁱⁱ Ohio Department of Education power user reports on student retention by grade level. http://ilrc.ode.state.oh.us/Power_Users.asp Accessed June 15, 2006.