

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE

Good evening,, Chairman Dwyer, Ranking Member Morgan and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Subcommittee of the Finance and Appropriations Committee. My name is Dayvenia Chesney and I am the Chief Operating Officer for Miami Valley Child Development Centers, which includes the three county service areas of Clark, Madison and Montgomery Counties. Our agency has been providing high-quality early education services for over 40 years in this area of Ohio. Currently we provide services for 102 infants and toddlers through Early Head Start federal funding and approximately 2600 preschool children through a combination of federal Head Start funding, state ELI sub-contracts and state Early Childhood sub-contracts. I am here today asking your support for the executive budget recommendations that relate primarily to Ohio's very youngest children.

The research about the impact of high quality on early care and education is well documented:

- A child's environment during the first five years of life greatly impacts the brain's ability to develop. 85% of a child's brain is developed by age 5.
- The Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland found that for every \$ 1 invested in high –quality preschool programs in Ohio, \$1.62 would be returned to the public. This is because young children exposed to high-quality instructional settings exhibit better language, math, cognitive and social skills than do children in lower-quality settings. Subsequently, students are 40 % less likely to need special education or repeat a grade and are 70% less likely to commit a violent crime by age 18.

There are several good things for young children in the budget as proposed:

1. Full-day kindergarten in a mixed delivery system: Research supports the validity of all day kindergarten especially for at-risk children. We realize that there may be many constraints that will make this prohibitive for full implementation. Because of this, we encourage the exploration of cost-savings by partnership with Birth to 5 programs to meet full-day kindergarten needs.

2. Eligibility level for state early education and care programs maintained at 200% of poverty:
This item speaks for itself, because families at this level of poverty cannot afford safe, quality care without assistance.
3. Stimulus dollars are critical: Without adequate funding for early education and care thousands of jobs hang in the balance. Without childcare, many Ohioans cannot work Parents of young children from birth to five needs a safe educational place for their children so they go to work to take care of their families.
4. The proposed budget creates the center for early Childhood development: This move will eliminate duplication and inconsistencies in such things as licensing, quality, research, professional development and accountability

With all these positive aspects of the proposed budget, we still need your help for the following:

- continuation of ELI funding the current 12,000 children enrolled: The budget includes only enough funding for 8000 children, most of whom will not be able to access other programs in the state
- continuation of Quality funding at the FY 08/09 level: Much progress is being made in the area of high quality education and care by child care centers being able to access the Step-Up –To Quality Star rating system. We need to ensure that all centers can access the help needed to improve services.
- continuation of the full-time, part-time and hourly definitions for subsidized child care: At the current time, for example, full-time hours are defined as 25 hours/week. If these definitions are not continued, providers will receive payment at a significantly reduced rate for children now considered full-time enrollees for 25 hours of care, not 35 hours as proposed. This is a serious problem because programs are required to staff for enrollment, not attendance. As with all businesses, there are fixed costs that cannot be changed just because the reimbursement rate changes.

With the passage of an executive budget that continues to include the needs of Ohio's youngest children, we can ensure that our commitment remains strong. More importantly we will see improved outcomes and benefits related to early learning and school readiness. I wish you guidance in your ongoing budget deliberations and appreciate you allowing me to share my comments with you. Thank you for all the work you do on behalf of Ohio's citizens and especially for those who cannot speak for themselves – our young children. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.