



POLICY PROGRESS REPORT

Small Steps BIG *MOMENTUM*

On the path to making Ohio the best place to be a child

In the past year, more people than ever joined together to push for increased investment in young children and families.

Access to support and care enables children to be healthy and ready to learn, and it empowers parents and professionals to work and earn. This strengthens Ohio and its workforce, today and tomorrow.

Ohio kids and families need us to keep going. Let's keep pushing this momentum forward, TOGETHER.



Dear Friends,

Now that I've had some time to reflect on (and recover from!) the grueling budget process, I am genuinely invigorated by what we accomplished together. Yes, the final version of our state's operating budget falls short of what Ohio's young children and the families that care for them need. Yes, it falls short of what early childhood professionals deserve. And yes, it falls short of what our business and community leadership demands. But the progress I'm talking about is so much bigger than the hard-fought—albeit incremental—budget “wins” we rightfully celebrate. What this budget process showed me is that Ohioans both understand and wildly support the evidence-informed policies necessary to make Ohio the best place to be a young child.

Simply put, together we have been on a long journey to build a movement on behalf of all children, our families, and our communities, and the evidence of its growth is everywhere!

The Governor's proposed budget included many new policies and investments to benefit young children. The Ohio House's version of the budget also included thoughtful, child-centered input. And although frustrating that many of those ideas didn't make it into the final budget, it is evidence that our legislative education efforts are working.

We also saw an increase in professional and business organizations including child care and early learning in their own policy priorities, thereby lending their trusted influence to our cause. Further, Ohio saw an increase in press coverage on child care, early learning, mental health, and the unique needs of pregnant women, infants, and toddlers. And we saw a substantial increase in the engagement of parents who desire to share their real-life challenges, as well as their hopes and dreams for their children. People from all walks of life are using their collective voices.

To everyone who worked with us on this budget—thank you. We know it wasn't easy, but you did make a difference! And no matter what, please don't stop speaking out, speaking up, and engaging with us. Rest assured, we are here to support you and are already preparing for the next steps. In no time, our growing momentum will become a galvanizing movement on behalf of all children that cannot be denied.

Warm personal regards,



Shannon Jones
President & CEO, Groundwork Ohio

CREATING CHANGE FOR YOUNG CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Creating change in our state requires coordination with a single focus. Our role is to collaborate with partners like you to ensure that policymakers and leaders act on behalf of babies, toddlers, preschoolers, and their families.

Groundwork Ohio orchestrates these
5 components of advancing change
to empower advocates of young children.

1

CONTEXT

Accurate data and expert insights to provide a comprehensive view of gaps and opportunities.

2

COMMUNICATION

Media and outreach to elevate the issues.

5

CONNECTION

Programs that bring people together to increase engagement and amplify calls to action.

4

COALITION

Partnerships with organizations and businesses to elevate shared priorities.

3

CHAMPIONS

Voices representing young children to shape the policies that will directly impact them, including parents, child care providers and early childhood educators, businesses, and health care leaders.



For 18 months, Groundwork Ohio worked across the 5 components of change to inform the conversation as policymakers deliberated on the Ohio biennial budget. Every step was part of building a movement on behalf of young children and families in Ohio. The efforts of our staff, together with partners, stakeholders, families, and advocates, resulted in higher-than-ever press coverage, outreach to policymakers, and convening to show diverse, wide-reaching support.



Review the full timeline of our activities!

groundworkohio.org/timeline

2022

CHAMPIONS

AMPLIFIED THE VOICES OF PARENTS, FAMILIES, & EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONALS

- **Filled the Statehouse with 700 CHILDREN & FAMILIES** to launch the Family Action Network.
- **Convened** experts, practitioners, and passionate advocates for advisory councils as part of each of our Centers of Excellence: Early Learning, Family Voice, Maternal & Young Child Health.

May 18

Launched the Family Action Network

August 2

Candidate Briefing Book released to all candidates in the primary election

October 6

Vote for Ohio Kids Leadership Forum

COALITION

CONVENED ADVOCATES FOR YOUNG CHILDREN FROM ACROSS OHIO INDUSTRIES

- **Hosted** the Vote for Ohio Kids Leadership Forum: *Moving from Crisis to Prevention* with **800 ATTENDEES** and the only statewide forum featuring both gubernatorial candidates to hear their proposals for addressing the needs of young children in Ohio.

COMMUNICATION

GROUNDWORK OHIO'S MEDIA STRATEGY RAISED THE PROFILE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD & CHILD CARE ISSUES

- **Cataloged 36 MEDIA STORIES**
- **Published** op-eds in major metropolitan newspapers on recommendations for the FY 24-25 budget, current poll data, and workforce issues—engaging policymakers and business leaders as co-authors.

COMMUNICATION

2022 MEDIA NEWS ARTICLE COVERAGE:

March 29

Cincinnati.com Op-Ed: "Investment in child care key to economic growth"

June 18

Columbus Dispatch Op-ed: "7 in 10 parents worry about kids' mental health, Resolving the crisis is crucial"

October 30

Cleveland.com Op-Ed: "As you mark your ballot, consider Ohio's children, the key to Ohio's future"

CHILDREN CANNOT ADVOCATE FOR THEMSELVES

CONNECTION

- **Orchestrated** *Big Voices for Little Kids Advocacy Day* at the Statehouse with **400 ADVOCATES** featuring legislative awards, a legislative panel, and meetings with nearly **50 STATE LEGISLATORS**.
- **Presented** advocacy training curriculum and materials to hundreds of participants at our annual advocacy day.
- **Reached 43,925 OHIOANS** with advocacy alert messaging.
- **Engaged** our network to send **5,202 MESSAGES** to policymakers.
- **Rallied** with hundreds of Ohioans and dozens of health and human service agencies during budget deliberations.

SHOWED ALIGNMENT BETWEEN BUSINESSES, EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONALS, & FAMILIES TO INVEST IN CHILD CARE

COALITION

- **Delivered** letter in person to **ALL POLICYMAKERS** with nearly **40 STATEWIDE** business leaders and organizations urging the legislature to prioritize investments in child care. (*Also a full-page ad in the Columbus Dispatch.*)
- **Provided** another full-page ad and letter to the legislature signed by three dozen child care organizations and an additional **700 CHILD CARE PROVIDERS** online.
- **Concluded** an impactful series with a final letter and ad signed by nearly **1,000 OHIO PARENTS IN PRINT** and **800 ONLINE**, asking policymakers to stand up for Ohio's children and families.

TRAVELED TO ALL CORNERS OF OHIO MEETING WITH PARTNERS, FAMILIES, & POLICYMAKERS

CONNECTION

- **Held and supported** over **100 MEETINGS WITH POLICYMAKERS** to provide issues expertise, and experiences from families, professionals, and businesses.



January 25
Released Early Childhood Dashboard

February 15
Budget Bill entered the Ohio House as House Bill 33

March 2
Released poll data showing child care funding as key to Ohio's economic strength; attained media coverage on needs of Ohio children and families

March 8
Held *Big Voices for Little Kids* Advocacy Day event

March 14
Early Childhood Educator panel convened to testify in the House Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services

March 21
Testified at the House Finance Subcommittee on Primary & Secondary Education

March 23
Testified at the House Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services

March 28
Testified at the House Finance Committee

March 29
Released open letter to call for investment in child care signed by nearly 40 business leaders and organizations

April 19
Testified at the House Finance Committee

April 26
House Bill 33 passed the House

May 3
Sub-House Bill 33 Recommended to the Senate Finance Committee

May 9
Released open letter to legislature signed by dozens of child care organizations

May 11
Testified at the Senate Medicaid Committee

May 16
Testified at the Senate Finance Committee

May 19
Ohio Chamber of Commerce "Down to Business" podcast on child care affordability & availability

May 24
Spoke on child care at Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce's Legislative Day

June 7
Released open letter to legislature signed by 1000+ parents and advocates

June 8
Testified at the Senate Finance Committee

June 14
Delivered recap of the three open letters to General Assembly

June 15
Sub-House Bill 33 passed by Ohio Senate

June 16
The State of Ohio: Child care panel discussion

June 20
Delivered factsheet on State of Ohio Babies to General Assembly

June 21
Ohio House voted not to concur with the Senate budget; bill moved to conference committee

June 21
Co-organizer in Rally for Ohio's Future with hundreds of advocates at the Statehouse

June 22
Delivered factsheet on Kindergarten Readiness in Ohio to General Assembly

June 29
Final Budget approved by General Assembly

July 3
Governor DeWine signs FY24-25 budget

PROVIDED INSIGHTS TO POLICYMAKERS ON WHAT YOUNG CHILDREN & FAMILIES NEED TO THRIVE

CONTEXT

- **Distributed** five issue-based factsheets illuminating challenges facing Ohio's families and **88 FACTSHEETS** (one per county) on early childhood stats.
- **Published** a first-of-its-kind Early Childhood Dashboard creating a thorough analysis of more than **60 METRICS ACROSS SIX DOMAINS**.
- **Created** factsheets on the State of Babies, Kindergarten Readiness, and WIC accessibility.

ENSURED OHIO POLICYMAKERS HEARD THE LIVED EXPERIENCES & EXPERT INSIGHTS TO CALL FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD INVESTMENTS

CHAMPIONS

- **Provided & Coordinated** public testimony from staff, family advocates, and partners **59 TIMES**.

2023 MEDIA NEWS ARTICLE COVERAGE:

January 31
Columbus Dispatch Op-Ed: "Data proof Ohio is failing its kids, Mike DeWine can change that"

March 15
Dayton Daily News: "DeWine budget calls for more support for early childcare: State child advocacy group says childcare should be treated like infrastructure funding"

April 12
Columbus Business First: "What the continuing childcare crisis means for the workforce"

April 16
Dayton Daily News: "'Child care crisis' holds back children, parents, economy"

April 17
Dayton Daily News: "'Workforce behind the workforce' challenged by low pay even as child care becomes less affordable"

April 18
Dayton Daily News: "New public money helping child care crisis; More is needed"

May 28
Dayton Daily News: "State budget should reflect the critical importance of child care"

May 30
Dayton Daily News: "Governor urges Senate to put \$150M child care program back in budget"

June 4
Cleveland.com: "Child care investment in Ohio budget will help small businesses thrive"

June 5
Ohio Capital Journal: "Work still to be done for Ohio's early childhood education, study shows"

June 6
NBC4: "Ohio advocates want lawmakers to restore \$150M in childcare grants"

June 14
Statehouse News Bureau: "Advocates urge Ohio's Republican senators to restore money for affordable child care in budget"

June 16
Ohio Capital Journal: "Surveys, Studies show child well-being needs work in Ohio"

THE FY 24-25 STATE BUDGET & THE PATH AHEAD

Groundwork Ohio is committed to ensuring Ohio's young children are healthy and ready to learn. While not enough, the final version of the budget did increase investment in supports that are valuable to children and families.

It's a step forward and a lot to build on. Together, we will push for investments in children, families, and the state's workforce.

Thanks to **YOUR** efforts, the final budget included:

- **A restoration of \$47 million in Senate cuts** to the investments proposed by the Governor and Ohio House of Representatives, ending state budget deliberations **with \$287 million in new investments:**
 1. **\$30 million** for child care infrastructure grants to **increase infant and toddler child care capacity** in communities with high infant mortality rates.
 2. **\$124 million for preschool**, a strong commitment led by the Governor and bolstered by the House that will serve more than 11,525 additional children.
 3. A line-item veto by Governor DeWine that **preserves Ohio's quality child care system** by preventing the exemption of most licensed, publicly funded child care programs from meeting Step Up to Quality rating requirements.
 4. **\$101.5 million** to support Help Me Grow **home visiting** and **\$32.2 million** to support **infant vitality** efforts.
 5. **Continuous Medicaid coverage for babies and toddlers**, birth through age three, keeping Ohio's youngest Medicaid-eligible children accessing consistent health care services.
 6. A path forward for **Medicaid reimbursement of doula services** so Medicaid-eligible pregnant women and their babies can benefit from this critical, non-clinical support.

For a full list of budget details, visit groundworkohio.org/voices

SAVE THE DATE!

Join us on Thursday, November 2nd

MOMENTUM

A Movement-Building Institute

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