

Jennifer Fowler

Family Action Network Parent Advocate

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Ohio Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee Chairperson Manchester, Vice Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Weinstein, and Members of the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee:

My name is Jennifer Fowler and I am a parent from Warren County. I am here today to urge you to restore the Governor's budget proposal, which included critical investments for a child tax credit.

When we moved to Lebanon, I truly believed it was our second chance. I thought with some help—child care assistance, job opportunities, and a safe place to grow—everything would fall into place. But after nearly two years, the reality has been incredibly hard. I've gone through four child care centers, missed multiple job opportunities because I couldn't secure care, filed appeal after appeal, and submitted countless applications—only to keep hitting walls.

I earned my Certified Peer Recovery Supporter credential and was even offered a great job—but I would need to ask for a pay cut just to stay eligible for basic support. That's not sustainable. I'm trying to do everything right, but it's like running on a wheel that never stops. The cost of living is rising, child care is out of reach, and services meant to help families like mine feel just out of grasp.

We're not asking for much—just a reliable system we can count on. Raising the federal poverty level to 200% would mean I could finally accept a good-paying job and still qualify for the support we need to survive. I want to give my daughter the future she deserves—a home, stability, and the chance to thrive. But right now, we're just trying to make it through each day.

Groundwork Ohio has outlined key priorities that will strengthen our state's early childhood system, including:

- **Child Care Crisis:** RESTORE publicly funded child care eligibility to 160% of FPL and RESTORE the Child Care Choice Voucher program to \$75M in FY26 and \$150M in FY27.
- **Economic Stability:** RESTORE the proposed refundable Child Tax Credit of up to \$1,000 per child under age 7.

These investments will not only help children thrive but also boost Ohio's workforce and economy. I urge you to fully fund these initiatives to ensure every child gets the best start in life. Thank you for your time and commitment to Ohio's children and families. I am happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Fowler