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Friday, June 30, 2023

The Honorable Mike DeWine
77 S. High St.
Ste. 30
Columbus, OH 43215

Re: Early Childhood Line-Item Veto Request

Dear Governor DeWine:

As recognized early childhood education professionals and advocates dedicated to the healthy development of young children, we urge you to line-item veto the following harmful provisions to Ohio's youngest children and the publicly funded child care system in Am. Sub. House Bill 33:

- Section R.C. 5104.31 of Am. Sub. House Bill 33 (Comp Doc JFSCD88), a provision added by the Ohio Senate that would undermine Ohio's quality child care system by expanding the existing exemptions from the Step Up to Quality rating requirement for a licensed child care programs providing publicly funded child care to less than 25% of its licensed capacity, by increasing that percentage to less than 50%. In effect, this expands the exemptions from impacting 60% of all licensed programs providing publicly funded care to 80% only 6 months after the first exemption was determined. This expansion blatantly ignores the needs of Ohio's children, parents, child care programs, and the economy.
- Sections R.C. 5104.015, 5104.017, 5104.018, 5104.29 of Am. Sub. House Bill 33 (Comp Doc JFSCD94), a provision added by the Ohio Senate that would prohibit the ODJFS director from adopting rules to require an administrator or employee of a licensed child day-care center or licensed family day-care home to hold or obtain a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree. It also prohibits the ratings developed for the Step Up to Quality Program from taking into consideration whether an administrator or employee of an early learning and development program that participates in Step Up to Quality holds or obtains a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree. This prohibition further de-professionalizes child care and preschool and undermines quality by lowering expectations for teachers.

The Ohio Senate's intentional unraveling of Step Up to Quality (SUTQ) not only fails to meet the needs of children, families, and early learning programs, but it also undermines the legislative study committee set forth in House Bill 110 (134th GA) intended to improve Ohio's

quality child care system. Even after a year of study in 2022, the Senate ignored the committee's final recommendations which were informed by substantial public testimony and robust stakeholder engagement. Instead, just a few days after the study committee's recommendations were released, the Senate inserted a last-minute provision in the closing days of the 134th GA in House Bill 45. This provision disregarded the well-documented needs of children experiencing poverty by excluding 60% of the publicly funded child care programs from the requirements of quality altogether.

And now, less than 6-months after this proposal was adopted and before the impact of this new policy can even be evaluated, the Ohio Senate has continued its dismantling of Step Up to Quality and inserted the above provisions in HB 33 that would exempt 80% of all publicly funded programs from Step Up to Quality requirements. The inserted provisions would also unnecessarily eliminate optional qualifications for child care professionals and preschool teachers, in a further attempt to ensure that our most vulnerable children get the lowest quality care.

Our elected officials should focus on solving the real challenges that impact our children – like the fact that Ohio's scores on the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment continue to decline with only 1 in 5 low-income children entering kindergarten ready to learn – and stop undermining the needs of Ohio's young children and those that care for them. Ohio's children, parents, child care professionals, employers, and overall economy deserve better.

We urge you to veto the provision to expand the existing exemption to Step Up to Quality and veto the prohibition on considering degrees of professionals as part of the system in Am. Sub. House Bill 33.

Sincerely,



Shannon Jones,
President & CEO
Groundwork Ohio



Kim Eckhart, Interim
Director Children's
Defense Fund-Ohio



Gloria Blevins, President,
Black Child Development
Institute Ohio



Dustin Holfinger, State
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American Heart Association



Julie Stone,
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Melissa Werve Arnold, CEO
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Shawna Rohrman, Ph.D.,
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Michael Corey,
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Chamber of Franklin County



Shannon Starkey-Taylor,
CEO Learning Grove



Rachel Konerman,
Executive Committee Chair
Ohio Voices for Learning



Eric Karolak, CEO
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Cynthia Rees,
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