

June 1, 2016

Cynthia Dungey, Director  
Ohio Department of Job & Family Services  
30 East Broad Street  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Director Dungey:

Ohio's goal should be for all families to have access to affordable quality child care in order to support achieving kindergarten readiness.

### **Research**

There are many reasons why quality early childhood education is important.

- Research shows that children who participate in a high quality learning environment are more likely to graduate from high school, pursue college or vocational training and have good careers as adults so they can contribute to their community as they grow.
- Increasing the availability of high quality child care will improve the kindergarten readiness of children and save future expenditures on remedial instruction. Studies have shown that for every dollar spent on a high quality early childhood education before kindergarten, there can be future savings of seven dollars.  
([https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/early\\_childhood\\_report1.pdf](https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/early_childhood_report1.pdf))

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### **Access**

Not all families have the same access to high quality child care.

- According to the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) and U.S. Census population data, the average availability of a licensed center or home based care (excluding part time and Head Start programs) is that only 15% of the children under age six could be enrolled.
- There are 21 counties in Ohio where less than 10% of the children under six could be enrolled with a licensed provider.

### **Affordability**

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reports that child care is becoming unaffordable for the average family.

- It is estimated that a family can afford approximately 10% of the family's income for child care.(US Dept. of HHS, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Care-2012)
- For a family of four in Ohio with two young children, (median income of \$66,000) they can expect to pay in excess of 25% of their gross income for child care.

Some counties may need to help parents afford a high quality child care provider.

## **Operators and Facilities**

In many areas the knowledge of how to profitably open and operate a licensed center or home may not be available. It is becoming more difficult to find and hire people who are qualified to work with young children and help get them ready for kindergarten. Additionally, the facilities with the proper space, toilets, sinks, kitchens, playgrounds, etc. may not be available where the child resides.

- To assist business owners, community based learning entities such as Ohio Child Care Resource and Referral Agency (OCCRRA) or the Ohio Association for the Education of Young Children (OAEYC) can help by offering to train and develop the future operators of these centers.

Investing in buildings, offering to train operators and increasing compensation to teachers are some of the ways that could be used to help create good operators and increase the number of facilities available for young children.

## **Recommendation**

It is now possible to use the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) to identify any county where the children are below the state mean in regard to their readiness for kindergarten. However, there is no one solution for kindergarten readiness. We therefore recommend the following:

1. The Kindergarten Readiness Assessment score for each county be published annually.
2. In counties that the mean KRA score is below the mean state score, we recommend a local early childhood committee be established with identified general objectives such as: convene early childhood leaders to meet quarterly; create a plan to increase KRA scores and prove the sustainability of the plan.
3. We recommend that funds be established to help improve the affordability, the accessibility and quality of Early Childhood Education for counties that are below the state mean KRA scores.

## **Summary**

The issues affecting kindergarten readiness are many and diverse. There is no one solution to the problem. Local input from parents, child care providers, educators and government officials is needed to begin to solve the problem of how to prepare children for kindergarten.

On behalf of the CCAC, I appreciate your consideration of these suggestions and would welcome an opportunity to discuss these recommendations further.

Sincerely,

Pamela M. Perrino, Chair  
Ohio Child Care Advisory Council