

December 18, 2015

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

Dear Director Dungey:

We appreciate the opportunity through the Child Care Advisory Council (CCAC) to offer recommendations and assistance to the Office of Family Assistance on matters affecting the availability, affordability, and quality of early care and education.

Over the past year, the Child Care Advisory Council has been evaluating many of the impacts on our children, families and providers to attain and maintain high-quality early care and education services. Particular concerns over the availability of child care in rural communities led to an ad-hoc committee to evaluate these concerns. Although this work is not yet complete, and more recommendations will come, one point is evident; child care funded by solely publicly funded child care dollars is not economically viable in our rural communities.

A primary focus of the Council has been evaluating approaches to increase the numbers of high quality early care and education programs across the state of Ohio. To meet the goal of all programs serving publicly funded children will be rated by 2020 and all center-based and type A family child care homes will be highly rated by 2025 immediate steps will need to be taken to support programs on that journey to higher quality. To meet the accessibility needs of rural communities and to ensure an adequate supply of high-quality early child care programs for low-income working families we are recommending a targeted approach to providing quality access.

Recent studies by groundWork and Ann Mitchell have produced results indicating that many programs are struggling financially to meet the requirements embedded in the tiered quality rating and improvement system. The latest research is showing that the tiered reimbursement structure currently in place does not adequately cover the cost of the increased quality expectations of a 3,4, or 5 star rated program. The data from the report analysis indicates that the current structure does not allow economic viability for the higher rated programs currently operating under the current structure of reimbursement.

It is the recommendation of the Council that the \$40 million dollars in casino funds authorized to ODJFS in the last State Budget be prioritized and utilized to begin to ensure access to child care programs in rural communities and increase access to high-quality programming across the state. This could be accomplished by increasing the center reimbursement rates in our rural communities (payment rate categories A-D) and increasing the tiered reimbursement for 3-, 4-, and 5-star rated centers, type A and type B family child care homes across the state. Although not the sole answer, the dedication of the \$40 million of casino funds to support our recommendation would go a long way to supporting the sustainability of the 2020 and 2025 goals.

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