the region's leading resource
in early education and care

4C
...for Children

April 15, 2015

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

Dear Director Dungey:

We appreciate the opportunity through Child Care Advisory Council (CCAC) to offer advice and assistance to the department on matters affecting the availability, affordability and quality of care.

Beginning in 2014 and continuing into 2015, CCAC has been trying to better understand the challenges in rural areas to successfully operate early childhood programs and to attain Step Up To Quality (SUTQ) ratings. Further, our group has been discussing how to best support the state's effort to increase quality in early childhood programs through SUTQ.

Current data show that there is not enough quality care available. Data also show that it is too costly for many Ohio early childhood programs to reach higher levels of quality. A recent presentation was made to CCAC by the advocacy group groundWork that presented an analysis of the cost of quality through data collected in the *Program Cost of Quality Calculator* (see attached). The report supported the concerns CCAC members have expressed about the cost of implementing standards of quality, especially at three-, four-, and five- star levels. The research showed that while the cost of quality is high in urban areas, cost is even more challenging for programs in rural areas.

To ensure the success of our early childhood system particularly as programs work to achieve higher quality, the Ohio Child Care Advisory Council would like to recommend the following:

1. That ODJFS consider a different approach to the market rate survey. The process is costly and no adjustments have been implemented since 2009. Currently there are five rate categories; providers in just 13 (urban) counties benefit from the highest rate category. Ohio's early childhood advocacy organizations (groundWork and the Alliance for Early Childhood) are recommending a decrease to the number of rate categories. We support this concept.

Central Office and Southwest Ohio Regional Office
1924 Dana Ave.
Cincinnati, OH 45207
513-221-0033
800-256-1296

Miami Valley Regional Office
1000 N. Keowee St.
Dayton, OH 45404
937-220-9660
800-256-1296

Kentucky Regional Office
525 W. Fifth St., Suite 215
Covington, KY 41011
859-781-3511
800-256-1296

Buffalo Trace–Gateway Field Office
291 Main St.
Morehead, KY 40351
606-784-5500

www.4cforchildren.org
facebook.com/4cforchildren
twitter: @4cforchildren

United Way
Agency Partner

Funded in part by the City of Cincinnati, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services and the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services – Division of Child Care.

2. That reimbursement rates be brought closer in line with the actual cost to provide quality service, with a particular focus on the needs in rural regions.

3. That the discussion of the cost of quality, especially as it impacts rural areas, move to the state's Early Childhood Advisory Council. The ECAC's purpose is to coordinate programs and state agencies serving Ohio children, prenatal through kindergarten, with a common goal of promoting school readiness. Financial barriers to program quality must be addressed in order for early childhood programs to support kindergarten readiness.

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

Sincerely,

Elaine Ward, Co Chair
Ohio Child Care Advisory Council