

**Ohio Senate
Finance Committee
FY2020-2021 Operating Budget
The Kid Connection Child Care Center
Lora Maxel, Owner/Director
June 5, 2019**

My name is Lora Maxel and I am the Owner/Director of The Kid Connection Child Care Center in Lewisburg in Preble County. Under the current budget proposal my county will sustain a rate decrease. If this happens it would be very detrimental to not only my center but to many other centers in my county.

I have been in business since October 1999. Before that I did in home childcare and was a county home provider. My whole life has been dedicated to the children of my county and community. I'm located in the far north corner of my county and the only childcare center in my community to serve these children. I have children in my center now that I had cared for their parents either in my home or the center. Most of my enrollment is publicly funded. If the reimbursement rate for my county is reduced I may be forced to close my center, leaving 98 children without child care.

I'm currently rated as a one-star center and I'm currently working to increase my star level to Step Up to Quality, but without the funding needed that will not be possible. The State of Ohio is requiring that centers that serve publicly funded children must be rated by 2020 and highly rated by 2025, but without the funds to do so, it may force centers to not serve the neediest group of children. We love our children and want to provide the most loving safe learning environment possible. We need funding to do so.

My center is located in Preble County, but near the border of Darke and Montgomery counties. It is hard for me to understand how my cost can be so drastically different than those just miles away in my adjacent counties. Why are we receiving a decrease when these others are receiving an increase in rates? In fact, last year when we received a rate increase, I was able to provide a small but critical wage increase to my staff. Facing a reduction now, I will not be able to sustain that increase. My staff's wages translate to the quality we are able to provide to the children we serve by reducing staff turnover and working towards my staff earning a living wage to be able to care for their own families. I currently offer free child care for my staff as an incentive to keep them at my center.

Many of our children that walk through my doors receive the best meals, attention, learning and love that they will get that day. Help us help these children! I beg of you PLEASE amend the State budget and prevent this from happening!