

Ohio Senate
Finance Committee
FY2020-2021 Operating Budget
St. Clair Academy Child Care Center
Micki Sittloh, Owner/Administrator
June 5, 2019

Good Afternoon, Chairman Dolan, Vice Chairman Burke, Ranking Member Sykes and members of the Senate Finance Committee. I am Micki Sittloh, owner and administrator of St. Clair Academy Child Care Center located in Eaton Ohio, Preble County. Thank you for the opportunity to give testimony concerning Substitute House Bill 166, Ohio's budget bill for state fiscal years 2020 and 2021. My testimony is limited to comment and concern on Ohio's quality child care system.

I am the proud owner and administrator of a small rural child care center. I care for 120 students, half of which receive federal funding and have 16 staff members. I took over running my center at the age of 23 years. I am going on 26 years of care. I have basically devoted my life to the care of the children in Preble County. I also chose a few years back to achieve my Master's degree in Early Childhood Development so that I may better serve the children and be a better leader for my staff. I have been doing this so long that students I had attending when I first came to the center are now bringing their children. I definitely don't do this job for the money. Lord knows teachers and child care workers do not get paid what they deserve. With that being said, I am disgusted that you are wanting to decrease the amount of money we will be paid for the care of the children. We are a small rural community with numerous families living on welfare and those families that aren't getting assistance struggle every day to make ends meet. We may not charge as much as the larger counties but that doesn't mean the care, we provide, is any less important or less qualified. It's because we feel for our families and don't want to make it any harder on them trying to pay for child care so they can go to work.

Preble County has less than a dozen centers so we are a close nit family. If we are holding a class or even a family event, we reach out to each other to see if they would like to join us. In fact, I had several phone calls from the other center about this issue and how we could band together to try to stop this belittling decrease in funding. This decrease will hurt all of us. We all survive on limited funds and yet strive every day to provide the best quality care we can and to enrich the lives of our children.

By choosing the few counties you have chosen to get a cut in tuition, has made me feel like you do not value our care. The care we provide is not of the same quality or of the same importance of the staff in the other counties. We are not worthy of the same pay strictly based on our location. The funds we receive allows us to buy materials and supplies that we greatly need. Which by the way isn't cheaper for us because we live in Preble County.

You are requiring us to participate in the SUTQ program and have given us deadlines to meet. All of these things cause added hours for my staff, increase in payroll, and added expense for supplies and yet you are going to take the funding away that we will use to meet these requirements. I guess I cannot put my mind around the decision you are trying to make. We are not just a number on a piece of paper. We are living breathing human beings that work our tail ends off every day because of the love of children. Please do not make it any harder than it already is.