

**Ohio Senate
Finance Committee
FY2020-2021 Operating Budget
Mary's Little Lambs Childcare and Preschool
MaryBeth Bush, Owner
June 5, 2019**

My name is Mary Beth Bush, and I am family childcare provider in Champion, Ohio, near Warren in Trumbull County. As a licensed Type B Childcare Provider, I am permitted to care for up to 6 children in my home. I'm proud that I am one of only 2 homecare providers in the county to be nationally accredited, and I have earned a 5-Star distinction under Ohio's Step Up to Quality initiative.

I began offering childcare in my home in 1995 after I had my second child and couldn't find acceptable daycare. At the time, I was a restaurant manager. Because I wanted to be the best I could be for my kiddos, I earned a Child Development Associate credential, also known as a CDA; then I went on to receive an associate's degree and, in 2018 at age 56, I completed my bachelor's degree in early education.

I continue to care for children on some evenings for local working parents, and on the weekends for Air Force reservists who are required to attend monthly trainings. There are hardly any childcare centers that are open on nights or weekends, though, of course, many parents work evening and weekend hours. Right now, for example, one of my moms is a nurse who works nights.

As you know, infants are our most vulnerable children. According to the reimbursement changes proposed by the administration, childcare providers in 13 counties across Ohio will be taking a significant decrease in pay for caring for our precious children. In the infant category alone, rated providers in Trumbull County will be taking significant decrease. Many parents rely on quality family child care providers to care for their infants because of the smaller ratios, continuity of having the same caregiver with their child, sometimes from birth through age twelve, and the homelike environment available in family childcare homes in their own neighborhoods.

I have been a family child care provider for twenty-five years. So much of my income has to be used for expenses to maintain quality and the regulations in place for caring for young children. Likewise, I have to purchase materials and equipment needed to successfully provide quality care for the children that parents trust me to care for while they are at work or school.

Specifically, caring for infants is expensive for business owners as well as parents. Consider all the special equipment that is needed to keep them safe, like cribs, for instance, which have specific regulations that must be adhered to. Furthermore, safety precautions are number one when caring for our little ones and these precautions continually need to be updated and this is expensive. Each and every family childcare business must follow the rules in place for infants and their businesses, including my own, and these will be greatly impacted if reimbursement rates are decreased in my county.

It will be impossible to continue to offer the quality care that is required for infants in counties that receive a reduction in rates that providers are paid to care for these precious little ones. Providers in Mahoning and Ashtabula counties, especially, care for a large population of families that qualify for state subsidies. How will all of these parents be able to go to work every day if there is no one to care for their infants? Where will these babies be cared for if the providers that love and care for them currently can no longer afford to care infants?

I ask that you support the “hold harmless” amendment to ensure that no child care provider will see a rate decrease in the proposed rate updated—specifically for those 13 counties who would be moved down to a lower peer group. This is absolutely critical to ensuring child care providers remain able to keep their doors open and serve our most at-risk families in quality environments.

I thank you for taking the time to read my comments. Our children are our future and deserve the best care ever so they can thrive, learn, and grow.