



Testimony to the House of Children and Seniors Committee
February 18, 2021

Chairwoman Concannon and Members of the Committee:

First off, I would like to thank you for having this hearing and allowing me to provide testimony in support of HB 2371. My name is Jenny Ehling and I am the Director of Early Childhood Services at the Family Resource Center. I have worked in Early Childhood for 23 years. The Family Resource Center is a large child care and preschool center in Pittsburg, licensed for 362 children.

A barrier many of our families have faced throughout the years is not being able to access child care assistance while attending school if they do not also work at least 20 hours per week; which in many cases forces the parent to piece together child care for their child(ren) provided by friends and family. By piecing together child care by numerous providers it takes away the opportunity for the child to have consistency and a routine that he/she can count on while the mother/father is at school. Consistency and routines are imperative for the development of young children.

We currently have less than 20 families accessing child care assistance in comparison to the 60+ families we have had in the past. The barriers and eligibility requirements have made it almost impossible for families to be able to access child care assistance. By removing the barrier of the work requirement and the 24-month lifetime limit for child care assistance while seeking a higher education, it would allow families to access quality child care while they are attending classes without the added worry of being able to afford child care. We know that single parents that have to work the minimum 20 hours per week, in addition to going to school do not finish their degree in the allotted 24 months. Without these barriers families will be able to attend school full time so that they can complete their degree to better meet their family's basic needs. Parents work hard every day to give their children a better future and a higher education can help open these doors!

Our goal, as a community, is to send children to school ready to learn and succeed not only in school, but in life in general. Quality early childhood care and education is a key component in helping children and families to do just that. Without the barriers that are addressed in HB 2371 parents would be able to receive assistance to help pay for quality early childhood programs while also working towards a better future through a higher education degree for themselves. I believe that HB 2371 is a solid step in the right direction in helping families look towards a brighter, more stable future without the worry of basic needs being met.

Sincerely,

Jenny Ehling, Director of Early Childhood Services
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