



RE: Legislative Issues, Spring 2016

Ohio is a leader in early childhood care and education and devoted to Ohio's youngest citizens. The state legislator has supported funding, initiatives, and policies that have helped hundreds of thousands of children to have quality, safe and nurturing programs for children to learn and for parents to have "peace of mind," to be able to work, attend school or training. In 2015, the legislature approved and the Governor signed the state budget which included two important goals; to only provide state funding to programs that have a minimum of one star under the Ohio's quality rating system (Step Up To Quality or SUTQ) by 2020, then only fund programs by 2025 that have obtained a high quality rating of three, four or five stars.

The following are policy issues that affect OACCP members and their ability to provide quality programs now and in the future:

Issue 1: Current reimbursement rates for ODJFS licensed centers that serve Ohio's low income working families through Publicly Funded Child Care- Despite the additional \$115 million in funding for Early Childhood Funding in the 2016 – 2017 State budget, only a fraction was designated for rates for year-round and full day child care reimbursement rates. The state has not significantly raised rates since 15 years ago and actually has recently effective reduced reimbursements by eliminating the Quality Achievements Awards under SUTQ. Providing quality programs are very labor intensive and reimbursements have not kept pace with minimum wage increases. In 2000 min wage was \$4.25 and today it has risen to \$8.10, or a 90% increase in minimum wage while reimbursements have stayed relatively flat.

Recommendation: Benchmark reimbursement rates to minimum wage.

Issue 2: Working families need access to year round and full day quality early care and education programs that provide child care and high quality preschool. Currently the state is making a large investment in funding preschool in a 12.5 hour per week, 9 month a year format, in only 120 of Ohio's 600+ school districts. Also the state will be eliminating funding for 3 year olds in public preschool starting this fall. Working families should not be forced to choose between quality preschool and child care, they need both.

Recommendation: Open up public preschool funding to all school districts and allow the continuation of public preschool funding for three year olds. Also, increase funding to year round and full day programs to increase the number of quality centers.

Issue 3: Multi-Function School Activity Bus (MFSAB) exemption for ODJFS licensed centers- In 2006, a compromise was settled between ODE, ODJFS and ODPS about eliminating the use of a conventional 15 passenger van and allowing ODJFS licensed to use MFSAB to drop off and pick up children from school from the center. The conventional 15 passenger van was deemed unsafe by the nation transportation safety board for school transportation. The MFSAB is a school bus with the exceptions it is not painted yellow and does not have a stop arm. Unfortunately, the final wear out date for 15 passenger vans is January 1, 2017 and the public administrators in the three departments were not aware of the compromise to allow for MFSAB vehicles. They are now and are working on policy to enforce the exempted use of the MFSAB by ODJFS licensed centers.

Recommendation: Support the policy that allows for Multi-Function School Activity Buses (MFSAB) for school transportation by ODJFS licensed centers and if possible put exemption into law.