

Childcare Needs State Support

To The Blade Editorial Board,

United Way of Greater Toledo and the YWCA of Northwest Ohio are writing in response to the [recent editorial on childcare](#). This article poignantly articulated threats to the childcare industry and how the pandemic has adversely impacted this crucial service.

It is also important to emphasize the role our State House Representatives and State Senators play in determining the future of **quality** childcare. We emphasize **quality**, because we believe that children in our community deserve to be engaging in rigorous and well-rounded educational-based care during their developmental years.

This is defined in the state's Step Up to Quality standards. A five-star system administered by the Ohio Department of Job & Family Services and the Ohio Department of Education. Step Up to Quality ensures that childcare providers are adhering to specified learning standards and employ teachers that are trained in birth to five developmental practices.

Some state legislators have characterized Step Up to Quality as "too expensive to sustain without additional investments and too expensive for private pay families." But, we, like many constituents, believe that caring for the future of our community should be done in a space that enriches a child's life. Of course every system has its flaws, but we cannot abandon the fight for **quality** — our kids deserve better.

Additionally, right now, as we write this letter, legislators are debating the state's 2022-2023 fiscal budget in Columbus. Childcare advocates across the state are rallying together, asking that an amendment be made to House Bill 110, which contains appropriation adjustments to the state budget.

The amendment we are asking for is that publicly funded child care eligibility be expanded; raising the threshold from 130 percent of the federal poverty level to 150 percent of the federal poverty level. In Ohio, for example, this would be allowing a family of four, who makes less than \$39,300 a year applicable for publicly funded care. By expanding eligibility, we can keep parents working, break the cycles of poverty through education, and ensure at least 14,000 more Ohio children have access to quality early learning.

With this, we must also shed light on the fact that providers, who have long-pushed for publicly funded childcare expansion, receive the proper reimbursements for that **quality** care. Childcare needs to be both financially accessible for families, and providers need to be compensated for their offered **quality** care to children and school-aged kids.

The type of care a child engages in, or has access to, will go on to determine if they graduate high school. That then determines whether they go on to college or pursue skill-based work.

Their work opportunities dictate whether or not they can pay for their basic needs like housing, food, transportation and healthcare. This domino effect starts on day one of a child's life.

To our community, and to our state legislators: Let's continue to support Step Up to Quality, expand publicly funded childcare and increase reimbursements for childcare providers.

Quality comes at a price, and it is up to us to determine whether or not our kids are worth it. We believe they are.