



PRESS RELEASE

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IT'S TIME FOR OHIO TO RELEASE \$800 MILLION IN FEDERAL CHILD CARE RESCUE FUNDS

At their breaking point, child care centers are closing and families are losing access

CLEVELAND, OHIO – The State of Ohio has yet to distribute \$800 million in federal American Rescue Plan Act grants that are earmarked to provide immediate relief to child care providers. These dollars are critically needed to stabilize Ohio's early learning sector. PRE4CLE, which works to expand access to high-quality preschool to every child in Cleveland as part of Cleveland's Plan for Transforming Schools, urges Governor Mike DeWine and the members of the Ohio General Assembly to put together a plan and release the funds immediately to ensure Ohio's workforce will continue to have access to essential and quality child care.

The American Rescue Plan Act provided \$24 billion for Child Care Stabilization Grants to states, which are required to be distributed to child care providers to cover their operating expenses as they face less revenue and higher expenses during the pandemic. Ohio received \$800 million in Child Care Stabilization Grants in the spring of 2021. To date, none of these funds has been distributed, and Ohio's risks leaving them on the table. Ohio Department of Job and Family Services has requested the State Controlling Board release nearly \$80 million in stabilization grant funds at the board's September 20 meeting but there has been no announcement on when the remainder will be released.

Specifically, PRE4CLE requests Gov. DeWine and members of the Ohio General Assembly do the following:

1. Solicit the public for feedback on how the dollars should be spent.
2. Create a plan for the use of the federal grant dollars.
3. Quickly and transparently begin releasing the funds.

"Families of young children are in crisis. In order to return to work, they need to have safe and high-quality early care and education options available in their neighborhoods. Early care and education programs across the state and in our community that were operating on razor thin margins before the pandemic are now at risk of permanently closing their doors," said Katie Kelly, PRE4CLE Executive Director. "The state has the power to provide immediate and critical relief to child care providers struggling to remain open and to support working families. Monday's Controlling Board request is a good start, but there needs to be a plan for the remaining \$720 million. We call on our state leaders to distribute that relief without delay."

Currently, Cleveland has a high-quality preschool shortage, with capacity to serve less than half of the city's preschool-age children. Prior to the pandemic, PRE4CLE successfully increased enrollment in high-quality preschool by 72%, leading to significantly increased kindergarten readiness in Cleveland.

Statewide, Groundwork Ohio estimates that before the pandemic, only 35% of Ohio's infants and toddlers were accessing high-quality publicly funded childcare – mostly due to the lack of available infant-toddler childcare providers in Ohio. Unfortunately, the pandemic has only exacerbated the state's childcare crisis as childcare providers across the state have closed their doors permanently due to the high cost of providing care, low enrollment, and the inability to find early childhood educators due to low wages, little-to-no employee benefits, and high-stress from the job.

High-quality preschool has been proven to set children on a path to success for life. Decades of research shows students who attend preschool programs that meet high-quality standards — such as degreed teachers, research-based curricula, and extensive outreach to families — are four times more likely to graduate from a four-year college and 50 percent more likely to have consistent employment in their late twenties.

There has never been a more urgent need to protect Ohio's child care industry nor has there ever been such significant funding available to do so. The best time to distribute the ARPA funds to child care providers was in June; the next best time is now.

"The ARPA funds were the single largest investment in childcare in our country's history, but the funds aren't doing any good just sitting there. We need to put the dollars to work now to provide the best start in school and life for Ohio's youngest learners," Kelly said. "The cost of doing nothing is too high."

About PRE4CLE: PRE4CLE is Cleveland's plan to expand access to high-quality preschool to all 3- and 4-year-olds in the city. PRE4CLE helps families find and enroll in high-quality preschool programs, connects preschool providers to tools and resources to increase their quality and serve more children, and provides strategic leadership and advocacy to accelerate the availability of high-quality preschool in Cleveland. PRE4CLE fulfills a core priority of *Cleveland's Plan for Transforming Schools* and is led by the Cleveland Early Childhood Compact. For a copy of the Annual Report and to view video interviews demonstrating PRE4CLE's impact, visit www.PRE4CLE.org.

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