Mr. Rodney L. Green
Making Child Care Affordable Testimony
April 30, 2026

Short Introductory Bio

Good afternoon. My name is Rodney Green and it is a privilege to be invited and a pleasure to be here today and sharing a few comments and thoughts with the Policy Committee. When I first started looking and working on early childcare issues, over 15 years ago, I never thought that the day would come when our legislative body would be holding hearings on the importance and the relevance of early education and child care. This is wonderful and I commend you for doing your due diligence and hard work.

As a lifelong educator, I worked in public education for 38 years, including stints as a teacher, counselor, school psychologist, principal, Director of Special Education, and finally as a Superintendent of Schools. That has been followed by 14 years of working as an Educational Consultant. Over the past 15 years, I had the opportunity to work closely with the Blair County Chamber of Commerce, where we formed, and I chaired, the Early Child Care Committee to look at two issues:

- First, how can we inform and advocate to the business community and other stakeholders about the importance of early childhood education and
- Second, how could we work with our early child care providers to support them as the strive to offer high quality child care and early education for all of Blair County families.

It was clear from the start that this committee, made-up of business leaders and early childhood providers, were committed to working and advocating on these issues. I learned a lot from all of the people on that committee. I learned a lot about myself and how I could be a facilitator to make these important issues relevant to all. But most importantly, I came to respect and genuinely admire the business leaders and child care providers in our area.

You may already know this - Many of our child care providers are also small business owners. This is important to know because they ---- better than anyone else ----- understand the balance between affordability and being able to continue to offer their services.

They work with the families, their clients ----every day and they see the struggles that families are facing. HERE IS A FACT - In many cases families are paying 25% or more of their disposable income for child care. I remember a time when a bank wouldn't give you a mortgage if you were spending more than 25% of your income. 25 % is a lot of money.

So really, Affordability is not a catch phrase, it's a reality for our families, it’s a reality for employees, and it’s a reality for their employers. Again, over the past 15 years I have seen tremendous cooperation, understanding, and innovation for the provision of child care services. But to repeat a phrase that often was spoken at our early childhood committee, “If childcare was such a profitable business, there would be a center in every Walmart.”

I say that with tongue in cheek, but I think it speaks to the difficulty and the challenges of providing quality and affordable childcare.

So what is the answer and how can you, as policymakers, support and innovate for these dedicated child care providers and families? I would like to offer a few thoughts.

First, I would recommend that you take a close look at the issue of quality versus good child care services. To offer another quote, "Perfect is the enemy of good." When it comes to affordable child care I believe that we need to review some of the regulations that affect the credential process for child care workers. The issue of staffing credentials has a direct impact on the triggers for additional revenue for the child care providers.

Please know… I want to make it clear that I'm not saying you should just simply lower the standards. But as a person who formerly was very much involved in making policy and implementing programs, I know that you can **"over regulate"** or **"over think"** what may be the best solution for all. I know you are familiar with the phrase, "Unintended Consequences". I believe in our zeal to focus on high quality programs, some of the thresholds that have been set for quality have come at the expense or might I say the affordability of heartfelt child care. That is an unintended consequence that is having real impact on real people.

As an example, child care providers must provide continuing education for their staff and assistants to maintain employment credentials. Often that continuing education is provided through coursework and classes. Sometimes it is at no cost. But at other times it is not, which is a cost of doing business. I believe that the child care providers should have greater latitude in recognizing the day-to-day experiences of their staff and that recognition could and should be used to a larger extent with their credentialing process.

Again, I'm not asking you to lower the standards but I am asking on behalf of the many providers that there be greater flexibility in how they hire staff and how they maintain those critical credentials needed to receive financial subsidy and state support.

Second, I would also recommend that as a policy making body - you look at what I would call the bigger picture of how education and early learning services are provided in the structural framework of state government. Again, I know you understand that PDE -the Pennsylvania Department of Education - is charged with regulating the implementation of K to 12 education services.

Likewise, OCDEL - the Office of Child Development and Early Learning, in partnership between the Pennsylvania Department of Education and the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services is here to support the growth and learning of our state's youngest children. Yet, OCDEL and PDE are funded separately in the state budget. I believe it is time for these two agencies, which at times function in what I would call policy silos, work more collaboratively. Structurally, these agencies need to look for ways in which they can eliminate duplication of services and have greater alignment with Birth to 12 educational programming.

As another example, the Pennsylvania Department of Education provides what is known as the Pre-K Counts program, which is managed and regulated separately from the Office of Child Development and Early Learning. From the perspective of families, who are the end user of educational services, it makes no difference to them that these two agencies are separate entities. These families may be unaware that there could be inefficiencies because of this current structural setup. I believe the time is right to look at overlap and duplication of services.

Finally, I would close my comments with the sobering fact that as a Commonwealth we are faced with a Demographic Cliff when it comes to enrollment of children in educational services and programs. Enrollments at school districts are down 5.8% over the last 10 years. Smaller families, and higher costs, will significantly impact the provision of all educational services for many years to come. This demographic cliff is our new reality and our policy and programs have to reflect that new reality.

Thank you for this opportunity and for the invitation to be here today. I wish you all the best and I am thankful that you are conducting these policy hearings to get valuable input from those who are intimately involved and directly affected by the policies that you make.