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**Ohio Children’s Budget Coalition Urges Governor DeWine and Administration to Prioritize Children in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Investments**

*Leading statewide child advocacy organizations band together to make concrete recommendations for ARPA funding to improve whole child wellbeing*

**COLUMBUS –** Today, the [Ohio Children’s Budget Coalition (OCBC)](http://www.ohiochildrensbudget.org/) sent a letter to Governor DeWine and his administration proposing four key areas for American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) state fiscal fund investment to support the well-being of children in Ohio.

The [Ohio Children’s Budget Coalition](http://www.ohiochildrensbudget.org) (OCBC), comprised of over 23 organizations across the state committed to the health and well-being of children, works to advocate for a fair and just children’s agenda that addresses the needs of the “whole child” for Ohio’s continued success. The Coalition worked during the budget process to advocate for funding to services and programs that impact children’s lives and aims to continue their advocacy beyond the budget process to ensure children’s needs are represented as significant federal dollars are allocated

The Coalition recognizes that the American Rescue Plan Act presents a unique and important opportunity for the state to make investments for children. Their recommendations, outlined in [this proposal letter to the governor’s administration](https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/cce47a4a-bcd9-4925-a126-8896c52aa15e/downloads/OCBC%20ARPA%20Proposals%209.23.21%20PDF.pdf?ver=1632414586519), include:

1. **Expansion of School Based Health Centers (SBHC’s) throughout Ohio-** Children’s health and mental wellness is foundational to their ability to thrive and flourish. Expanding equitable access to physical and mental health services through community connected, school-based health care (working with community-centered providers and with school health staff) increases access to quality health care for the whole community. School-based health care reduces barriers that so many children face accessing quality health care and can provide diversion from avoidable out of home placements. That is why the OCBC asks the state to [invest $25 million per year, over two years to support access to integrated school-based, community-connected health care](https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/cce47a4a-bcd9-4925-a126-8896c52aa15e/downloads/SBHC%20ARP%20proposal%204.19.21.pdf?ver=1632411797935).
2. **One-time direct payments for essential workers with low wages who have children-** Many people have taken on added risk to themselves and their families to carry out critical jobs during the pandemic. Home health and personal care aides, nursing assistants, teacher assistants, and child care workers are all essential workers and these individuals also are among the lowest paid workers in Ohio. Therefore, OCBC recommends an allocation of $50 million of state ARPA funds for a grant program for frontline essential workers with children to help families with income at or below 200% of the federal poverty level meet their basic household needs, including child care, food, housing, utilities, etc.
3. **Child Tax Credit Navigator Network-** Raising children can be expensive and many families struggle with the costs of child care, housing, clothing, food, and medical expenses. According to a strong body of research, the path to ending child poverty is providing child-focused financial support to families. The American Rescue Plan Act expanded the Child Tax Credit (CTC) to provide an increased advance credit to more families. Over 92 percent of Ohio’s children qualify for the child tax credit, and it is already having a positive impact on Ohio families. OCBC wants to make sure all eligible families receive these critical funds. To do this, OCBC recommends an investment of $10 million in ARPA funding to hire and train CTC navigators to assist families to enroll in the expanded Child Tax Credit and other public benefit programs.
4. **$50 million per year for improved and modernized early learning facilities-**Unfortunately, many of our center-based high-quality early education centers across Ohio are experiencing common, yet costly, infrastructure challenges that ARPA dollars can play a key role to urgently address. OCBC urges investments to support early childhood programs in addressing and mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on their operations and ensuring the remediation of lead paint and other hazards that pose negative lifelong consequences to exposed and poisoned children, in child care facilities. OCBC seeks an investment of [$50 million to support renovation projects](https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/cce47a4a-bcd9-4925-a126-8896c52aa15e/downloads/ARPA%20Request%20PRE4CLE%20Final_State.pdf?ver=1632415268452) in early learning centers to increase safety, improve early learning conditions, and enhance the functionality of our early childhood facilities.

The coalition emphasizes that these funds represent a key opportunity to create a better future for all Ohioans, no matter our race, zip code, income, or ability.

***For more information about OCBC’s School-Based Health Care proposal, please contact:*** Nikki Reiss, Senior Strategist, Advocacy & Communications Solutions, 614-581-0306, nikki@advocacyandcommunication.org

***For more information about OCBC’s One-time Hazard Pay proposal, please contact:*** Will Petrik, Budget Researcher, Policy Matters Ohio, 614-221-4505, WPetrik@policymattersohio.org

***For more information about OCBC’s Child Tax Credit Navigator proposal, please contact:*** Katherine Ungar, Policy Associate, Children’s Defense Fund-Ohio, 216-346-8465, kungar@childrensdefense.org

***For more information about OCBC’s Child Care Modernization proposal, please contact:*** Katie Kelly, Executive Director, Pre4Cle, 216-224-9554, kkelly@pre4cle.org

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[*Ohio Children’s Budget Coalition*](https://ohiochildrensbudget.org/) *(OCBC) was established in 2018 and is committed to prioritizing the needs of children in Ohio’s state policy and budget decisions. This unprecedented statewide partnership is comprised of over 18 organizations, listed on the Ohio Children’s Budget Coalition Website.*