



**OHIO
CHILDREN'S
BUDGET**
2022-2023

September 23, 2021

The Honorable Governor Mike DeWine

Rife Center, 30th Floor
77 South High Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Governor DeWine,

The [Ohio Children's Budget Coalition](#), 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. We worked during the budget process to advocate for funding to services and programs that significantly impact children's lives, and we are hopeful for the strides made forward as well as grateful for the opportunity to work with your administration to advance these gains for child and family well-being in our state.

While we know that childhood poverty, malnourishment, and instability existed prior to the pandemic, we recognize that these problems are far more prevalent among Ohioans and our children today due to the hardships of this public health crisis. Fortunately, the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dedicates significant resources to help stabilize and improve the lives of Ohioans, particularly Ohio's children. These funds represent a key opportunity to create a better future for all of us, no matter our zip code, race, income, or ability. As a coalition that advocates for children, we respectfully request the following four proposals for ARPA state fiscal recovery allocation for your consideration.

1. Expansion of School Based Health Centers (SBHC's) throughout Ohio

The Need

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. This type of upstream investment expands comprehensive community mental health services and serves as a long-term investment in public safety, by providing children who are at risk of criminal justice system involvement with the behavioral and mental health services that they need. Investments in education and health services can prevent future policy problems, by interrupting the community-to-prison pipeline and other adverse outcomes experienced by multi-system youth. The presence of school-based health care represents a "medical home" for families.

ARPA State Fiscal Recovery Fund Appropriation

Invest \$25 million per year, over two years to support access to integrated school-based, community-connected health care. This allocation from ARPA would be administered through a



OHIO CHILDREN'S BUDGET

2022-2023

statewide program jointly involving the Department of Health, the Department of Education, and the Department of Medicaid. This type of investment is an eligible use of state fiscal relief funds under ARPA (See question 4.8 in this [Treasury FAQ](#)). The state funds should be made available for the following needs:

- Capital costs to build new health care sites/centers;
- Technology infrastructure to support ongoing telehealth appointments and care;
- Personnel to allow a school-based health program to grow to a sustainable size, based on the ability to bill for services. Potentially, these personnel, including school nurses, social workers, or counselors, could be embedded in a school building and facilitate telehealth visits with specialists/other health professionals;
- Mobile units that can be used to serve schools during the day, and potentially other sites outside of school hours;
- Program evaluation;
- Communication and community outreach with local health and behavioral health providers and coordination services; and
- Staff training.

The pilot should prioritize schools that serve children of color and children at highest risk of poor outcomes due to other systemic and structural inequities. Attached to this memo is a report that provides details and ideas for allocation of resources to address SBHC's throughout Ohio. This report was submitted to your office and in addition to members of the Ohio Children's Budget Coalition, is supported by various organizations across Ohio. We urge you to prioritize mental health services for our children. ([Read this memo for more details.](#))

2. One-time direct payments for essential workers with low wages who have children

The Need

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. Each of these jobs pays so little (all have an average annual wage below \$30,000 based on 2020 data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics) that a family of three would need food assistance to make ends meet. These challenges are exacerbated for frontline workers who have children and are responsible for the additional costs of caring for a child (food, child care, etc.). Direct payments to essential workers earning low-wages will help families address immediate emergency needs, pay off debt, and provide much needed support to enhance family security, stability, and wellbeing, as other pandemic-related benefits, such as emergency allotments in SNAP, come to an end.

ARPA State Fiscal Recovery Fund Appropriation

Allocate \$50 million of our 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. Providing essential workers with one time hazard pay is an eligible use of state fiscal relief funds under ARPA (See section 5 in this [Treasury FAQ](#)). Other states have used federal dollars to provide additional funding to frontline



OHIO CHILDREN'S BUDGET

2022-2023

essential workers and we should follow their lead to ensure our frontline workers receive compensation for their tireless work. Ohio should allocate \$50 million in funds, like Pennsylvania's grant requests and Michigan's executive budget proposal for direct care workers alone, to award \$1,000 payments to each worker with children, and enable workers to apply on their own behalf. These payments will provide working families with much needed relief and allow Ohio families to thrive.

3. Child Tax Credit Navigator Network

The Need

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. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's Household Pulse Survey, families have reported the ability to purchase food and groceries, pay their rent, mortgage, and utilities, and even use payments toward back-to-school books and supplies for their children. While many families are receiving the expanded CTC checks automatically because they filed a tax return in 2020 or 2019 or signed up to receive stimulus checks, there are unfortunately many Ohio families who are eligible for but are missing out on the child tax credit because they are unaware or unable to access the new benefits. Most of these families are among the lowest-income Ohioans, not required to file taxes in the past years, and therefore, unlikely to have received stimulus payments during the pandemic and who will not receive the CTC automatically. In other words, those families who stand to benefit the most are most at risk of not receiving CTC payments they are eligible for. Not only does the CTC help Ohio families meet their basic needs, it helps stimulate our economy. This type of poverty reduction tool can shield children from factors that often lead to court involvement. We urge the administration to use ARPA funds to help more families access the CTC.

ARPA State Fiscal Recovery Fund Appropriation

Invest \$10 million in ARPA funding to hire and train CTC navigators to assist families to enroll in the expanded Child Tax Credit. Helping people sign up for the CTC is an eligible use of state fiscal relief funds under ARPA (See question 4.12 in this [Treasury FAQ](#)), and will help Ohio families with children spend in their local communities for needed items like childcare, clothing, rent, and food. A short-term CTC navigator program will provide significant returns for Ohioans—simultaneously helping Ohio's families put food on the table and fueling local businesses.

4. \$50 million per year for improved and modernized early learning facilities

The Need

Every child, regardless of race, class, or zip code, deserves access to safe, high-quality early childhood programs located in high-quality facilities, regardless of where they live. High-quality childcare prepares our children to be school-ready and to flourish in their future. Childcare also helps parents remain in the workforce and keep our economy running. 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. We urge



**OHIO
CHILDREN'S
BUDGET**
2022-2023

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. ([Read this memo for more details.](#))

ARPA State Fiscal Recovery Fund Appropriation

Appropriate \$50 million to support renovation projects in early learning centers. These projects will increase safety, improve early learning conditions, and enhance the functionality of our early childhood facilities. These funds would provide a multi-generational impact on the health and wellbeing of Ohio's young children and support increased kindergarten readiness and school success. We have attached a report with additional details of this request.

We appreciate your commitment and dedication to the children of Ohio. Investments that nurture the whole child will lead to a flourishing Ohio. The Ohio Children's Budget Coalition stands ready to work with you in the coming weeks and months to make sure that Ohio uses federal relief dollars to provide relief to the children and families across our state.

Sincerely,

Tracy Nájera

Executive Director

Children's Defense Fund-Ohio and Representing [the Ohio Children's Budget Coalition](#)

[Advocates for Ohio's Future](#)

[Center for Community Solutions](#)

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[Groundwork Ohio](#)

[Juvenile Justice Coalition](#)

[Public Children Services Association of Ohio](#)

[Women's Public Policy Network](#)

[Ohio Children's Alliance](#)

[Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio \(COHHIO\)](#)

[Buckeye Hills Regional Council](#)

[Ohio Children's Hunger Alliance](#)

[Ohio Lead Free Kids Coalition](#)

[Policy Matters Ohio](#)

[Ohio Education Association](#)

[Ohio Federation of Teachers](#)

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[Ohio Poverty Law Center](#)

[Council for a Strong America](#)

[Ohio Head Start Association, Inc.](#)

[Appalachian Children Coalition](#)

Research & Technical Assistance partner: [Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at The Ohio State University](#)