

**House Families and Aging Committee  
House Bill 676  
Troy Hunter, Senior Policy Director  
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Chair Schmidt, Vice Chair Miller, Ranking Member Denson, and members of the House Families and Aging Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 676. My name is Troy Hunter, and I am the Senior Policy Director at Groundwork Ohio.

Groundwork Ohio is a statewide, nonpartisan public-policy research and advocacy organization committed to championing high-quality early learning and healthy development strategies for children from the prenatal period to age five. Our mission is to make Ohio the best place to be a young child, ensuring every child can reach their full potential.

Today, I speak in support of House Bill 676, a bipartisan initiative introduced by Representatives Rachel Baker and Cindy Abrams. This bill seeks to establish Prescribed Pediatric Extended Care centers (PPECC), providing support to children with complex medical needs and their families.



Families raising children with complex needs face overwhelming emotional, financial, and logistical challenges. Groundwork Ohio's recently surveyed families across the state and revealed stark realities for families with children with disabilities and complex medical needs:

- Nearly **1 in 5 families**<sup>i</sup> reported having a child with a developmental disability.
- **60%**<sup>ii</sup> of these families found it difficult to locate child care providers who could meet their child's needs.

- **80%**<sup>iii</sup> experienced workforce disruptions due to challenges with child care arrangements.

These families navigate a fragmented early childhood system, where barriers to affordable child care and timely health care create significant stress. Parents often face impossible choices, balancing caregiving, work, and their family's overall well-being.

House Bill 676 provides a solution for families of medically complex children by establishing PPEC centers. These facilities will:

- Offer specialized care for medically dependent or technologically dependent children requiring ongoing medical interventions or skilled nursing supervision.
- Be staffed by trained medical professionals to provide high-quality, individualized care.
- Allow services to be billed through Medicaid, reducing financial burdens on families.

In State Fiscal Year 2024, Ohio's Early Intervention programs served 29,622 children<sup>iv</sup>, many of whom had complex medical needs that traditional child care centers weren't unequipped to handle. These children and their families represent a significant portion of the population navigating an early childhood system that lacks the infrastructure to meet their unique requirements. Premature births, which accounted for 10.8%<sup>v</sup> of all births in Ohio in 2022, are often linked to complex medical needs that demand specialized care and support.

Additionally, 23.2%<sup>vi</sup> of children aged 0-17 in Ohio have been identified with special health care needs, showing the widespread demand for targeted services. Alarmingly, families with children who have complex, chronic conditions often face challenges accessing care, with 24%<sup>vii</sup> receiving out-of-network care, compared to only 14% of those with noncomplex conditions and 7% of those without chronic health problems.

These realities paint a clear picture of the urgent need for solutions like those proposed in House Bill 676. The establishment of Prescribed Pediatric Extended Care centers would address these gaps, providing a structured, inclusive environment staffed with medical professionals who are equipped to care for children with complex medical needs. By ensuring access to specialized care through Medicaid funding, this bill would alleviate the stress on families, reduce financial burdens, and ensure that every child, regardless of their medical challenges, can access the care and early learning opportunities they need to thrive.

These centers are essential to addressing the care gap for children with complex medical needs, helping families access reliable, affordable support that promotes the well-being of both children and caregivers.

**There is isolation, stress, and economic instability faced by families with children with disabilities and complex medical needs. For these families, PPEC centers would represent a lifeline, providing consistent, specialized care while enabling parents to return to work or manage other family responsibilities.**

Ohio has a unique opportunity to lead with this innovative model. By supporting House Bill 676, the state can help ensure that all families, regardless of their child's needs, have access to the care and services they deserve.

Chair Schmidt and members of the committee, I urge you to support House Bill 676 and invest in the future of Ohio's children and families. This legislation reflects a commitment to practical solutions for the challenges faced by our most vulnerable families. **Families should not be forced to choose between their careers and their child's well-being.**

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

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<sup>i</sup> Groundwork Ohio. (2024). [Families of children with developmental disabilities](#). Family Voices Project.

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid

<sup>iii</sup> Ibid

<sup>iv</sup> Ohio Early Intervention. (2024.). [State fiscal year 2024 early intervention overview](#).

<sup>v</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, WONDER, 2022

<sup>vi</sup> United Health Foundation. (2022-2023) [Percentage of children with special health care needs in Ohio](#). America's Health Rankings.

<sup>vii</sup> Xu, W. Y., Li, Y., Song, C., Bose-Brill, S., & Retchin, S. M. (2022). [Out-of-network care in commercially insured pediatric patients according to medical complexity](#). *Medical Care*, 60(5), 375-380.