

Through the Ohio Department of Children and Youth, Ohio has a unique opportunity to improve outcomes for children by better aligning strategy, funding, and data across systems. With a focus on transparency, efficiency, and the effective use of resources, the Department can help ensure investments are well-coordinated, accountable, and delivering measurable results for families and communities.

1 Child Care and Preschool are Essential to Ohio's Workforce and Economy

Expand access to affordable, safe child care and preschool.

Ohio faces a projected \$375 million shortfall per year in child care funding, putting families, employers, and local economies at risk. When parents can't find or afford reliable child care or preschool, businesses lose workers and productivity suffers. Today, child care gaps cost Ohio an estimated \$5.48 billion every year in lost economic activity.¹

Voters agree—nearly 80% of Ohioans across party lines say the lack of affordable, quality child care is a crisis or major problem, and 70% support an increased state investment in publicly funded child care so that more working families have access.² Investing in child care and preschool strengthens the workforce today and ensures children arrive at kindergarten ready to learn tomorrow. Child care isn't a family issue alone—it's a business, workforce, and economic competitiveness issue for Ohio.

2 Protect Health Coverage for Ohio's Moms and Babies

Medicaid keeps families healthy, working, and financially stable.

Nearly 380,000 children under age six—almost half of Ohio's youngest children—rely on Medicaid, and roughly one in two Ohio births is covered by the program.³ Just over 30-percent of children, ages 3-5, needed to see a mental health professional but were not able to in the last 12 months⁴, while mental health disorders including post-partum depression continue to be the leading cause of pregnancy-related deaths.⁵ Proposed cuts don't just affect low-income families; they shift costs across the entire health care system, driving up premiums for everyone.

Stable access to preventive, routine, and pregnancy and postpartum care promotes positive pregnancy and birth outcomes, keeps children healthy, supports parents' ability to work, and ensures children with complex medical needs can thrive. Protecting Medicaid is about fiscal responsibility, healthier communities, and ensuring no child falls through the cracks.

3 Make Work Pay for Ohio Families

When families can afford the basics, they can contribute to Ohio's economy.

Ohio families are working hard, but rising costs for child care, housing, food, and health care are making it harder to get ahead. Over half (54%) of Ohio voters say they want to see a lower cost of living. Everyday things—like gas, housing, utility costs, and the price of food are the most concerning to Ohioans.⁶

Policymakers can advance pro-work, pro-family solutions that put more money back in the pockets of working families—such as targeted tax relief for families with young children, including a refundable Child Tax Credit.

4 Healthy Moms and Babies Are the Foundation of a Strong Ohio

We know what works - and we must continue to strengthen, expand, and improve it.

Ohio continues to rank among the bottom 10 states for infant mortality⁷, with 11% of infants born preterm⁸—a challenge that affects families in every corner of the state. Evidence-informed programs like home visiting, community-led infant vitality initiatives, Medicaid coverage of doulas, and Early Intervention improve birth outcomes, support maternal health, mental health, and child development, while preventing abuse and neglect and reducing unnecessary child welfare involvement. These solutions save lives while reducing long-term health costs.

Ohio must both sustain what works and remain responsive to emerging needs – expanding proven strategies while continuing to learn, innovate, and improve outcomes for moms and babies. Healthy starts lead to healthier children, stronger families, and lower costs for taxpayers over time.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Early childhood investments are not “nice to have”—they are essential to Ohio's economic future. By supporting child care, strengthening family incomes, improving maternal and infant health, and protecting health coverage, Ohio can grow its workforce, reduce long-term costs, and give every child a strong start.

1. [Untapped Potential: Ohio](#), U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, 2025

2. [Groundwork Ohio Child Care Poll, 2025](#)

3. [Ohio Department of Medicaid Annual Report SFY19](#), Medicaid, 2019

4. Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). (2023-2024). [National Survey of Children's Health](#)

5. Wisner, K. L., Murphy, C., & Thomas, M. M. (2024). Prioritizing maternal mental health in addressing morbidity and mortality. *JAMA Psychiatry*, 81(5), 521

6. [Groundwork Ohio Child Care Poll, 2025](#)

7. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Wide-ranging Online Data for Epidemiologic Research, WONDER, 2022

8. [2025 March Of Dimes Report Card For Ohio](#) | PeriStats | March of Dimes