

Thank you for allowing me some time today. My name is Eva Rippeteau, I work for Oregon AFSCME Council 75. We have members who are licensed in-home child care providers, members at Southern Oregon Head Start and some members who work at a county Commission on Children and Families. Most of my focus today will be from the Child Care Providers perspective.

Oregon AFSCME is supportive of HB 4165 and like the goals of having children enter school ready to learn and the conversations around how to best make that happen. However, we do have some questions and concerns that I believe are being addressed in amendments or through discussions at the Early Learning Council.

#### **What we like:**

Oregon AFSCME likes that the Governor is asking us to look at ways to improve and streamline access to all services for families. We are appreciative of the conversations that the Early Learning Council has been having on what is working in the state and where improvements could be made. We are also appreciative that calls for meetings to be held at times when parents and providers of the services that are impacted can attend have been heard and those meetings are being scheduled. We encourage passing the amendments that give more time for these hearings to address the big tasks that the Early Learning Council is being given.

#### **What is Quality Care?**

Our first concern is over the definition of "quality child care." The roles of child care providers vary with the exception of providing safe and stable care for the children in their care. Some of AFSCME's providers provide care during traditional working hours and have more of a curriculum. Some of our providers see a child for only dinner or lunch because they also go to Head Start or stay with a family friend or family member. Some providers care for children overnight. The definition of "quality care" needs to reflect the needs that the providers fill. Not all of them will be able to have educational outcomes for all of their children.

Will a provider that cares for a child only a few hours a week or overnights have to meet educational benchmarks?

While our child care members look forward to opportunities for trainings, and have participated in discussions around what quality care is, they are concerned that quality will take priority over access to child care for all families. We should keep in mind that quality and training requirements will cost providers and or the state more money and may raise the cost of care. How will those costs be absorbed without again impacting lower income families?

**How we will address the needs of children over 5?** Child care providers don't fit solely in the category of "early learning." They care for school aged children up to the age of 12 before and after school and during school breaks. How do or will Child Care providers fit into the Youth Development Council?

AFSCME members from all areas expressed concern over making sure that each role in the early learning system is recognized as vital. Child care plays the role of providing a safe, stable place for children while their parents work and Head Start provides a place for learning beyond the socialization and basics covered at child care.

We are looking at big changes and there are some very important and productive conversations that are happening. I believe that with amendments that give the Early Learning more time to have these discussions.