



To: House Committee on Higher Education and Workforce Development
From: Jonathan Farmer Western Oregon University
Re: Support for HB 3149, Childcare Taskforce for Community Colleges

Good Morning Chair Dembrow and members of the committee. My name is Jonathan Farmer and I am a 28 year old Oregon native. I am and have been Student Body President of Western Oregon University for the past two years and with my gorgeous wife of six years, have been raising our daughter for the last three. I have learned a couple of things over the last three years of raising my daughter Siena that I would like to share with you.

The first is that the only thing constant with children is change. Everything from the size of clothes they wear and the types of food they can eat to the things they need to learn and the tools and time needed to teach them. Keeping up with the changes and supporting children is obviously an expensive undertaking and not something that came as a surprise to myself or my wife. What was surprising is the cost of childcare even when utilizing college resources. My wife and I both held career positions prior to my entering college and the birth of our daughter. If my wife were to return to work she would essentially be working to cover the cost of childcare and not much else. In fact, a study in 2012, "Child Care Aware of America", said that, "In 35 states and the District of Columbia, the average annual cost for center based care - was higher than a year's - tuition and related fees at a four year public college."¹ It is also worth noting that it put Oregon in the top three "least affordable states."¹ Without affordable options for quality childcare providing for my daughter's ever changing needs and preparing her for her role in 40-40-20 is seemingly insurmountable.

The second thing I have learned is the apple doesn't fall far from the tree. I know that Siena will repeat every word I say as the gospel truth and that if I tell her something is possible she will do her best to achieve it. I hope in 3 months that I will be able to tell her for a fact that graduating from a university is possible for our family. Being a first generation college student no one told me it was possible for a Farmer to graduate from a university and because of the time I have had to drop out for various mandatory work trainings it has taken me longer than the allotted 4 years to do so. I have been constantly working at-least one full-time job and sometimes multiple other jobs to provide for the care of my child. While I am lucky to have my wife Stephanie still by my side in caring for our daughter I know that countless others are attempting to do so single handedly. The struggle to truly be a parent and a student for myself was nearly impossible to balance and I cannot even imagine what single –