



Oregon

John A. Kitzhaber, M.D., Governor

Department of Human Services

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DATE: February 9, 2015

TO: Chair Alisa Keny-Guyer
House and Human Services Committee

FROM: Rhonda Prodzinski, Program Manager
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SUBJECT: Testimony in Support of HB 2015

Chair Keny-Guyer and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these written comments in support of HB 2015, which will make improvements and investments in child care in Oregon. The child care program which DHS administers, the Employment Related Day Care Program (ERDC) has the dual purpose of promoting family self-sufficiency and fostering healthy child development. With the high cost of child care, it's more important than ever that assistance is available to low income working families. HB 2015 will support Oregon's low income working families, as well as align with the state's early learning priorities and bring Oregon into compliance with the new federal Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) rules for child care subsidy.

HB 2015 will increase the stability and availability of quality child care throughout Oregon. This bill strengthens DHS's goal of outreach in rural and urban areas of the state, with an emphasis on the underserved ethnic and minority populations. More specifically, DHS supports this bill and the positive impacts it will generate in these areas:

- Protects eligibility for families for 12 months, even when there is a job change or loss. This will allow children to remain in stable, quality care while the parent is engaged in work search and enables continuity of child care.

"Assisting People to Become Independent, Healthy and Safe"

- Allows working students to use child care subsidy to cover both work hours and school hours, thus removing some of the burden from our working parents who are enrolled in higher education. This benefits working parents by broadening their options to attend higher education as they work toward self-sufficiency by increasing their options in the employment market.
- Restores ERDC to families who are self-employed and meet eligibility criteria. Due to 2009 program reductions, about 200 families with self-employed parents lost their child care subsidy.
- Provide incentives for parents who use providers that meet minimum standards for the tiered quality rating and improvement system. More low income children will receive quality child care that helps prepare them for school.
- Provide incentives for child care providers who meet the specified minimum standards of the tiered quality rating and improvement system and offer care to subsidy children. This allows opportunities for low income children in more demographic to have access to quality child care programs.
- Increases the safety of children in care by ensuring providers are complying with State and federal laws when providing child care through on-site inspections of the child care premises, including those exempt from licensure.

Research shows the connection between high-quality early childhood experiences and children's school readiness and later life success. Quality child care nurtures a child's learning and development, so the child is better prepared to succeed in school and later in life. ERDC is a critical component because it helps parents stay employed and gain self-sufficiency by assisting with the consistent, stable child care needed to remain on the job. HB 2015 promotes these efforts, and that is why the department supports this bill and requests your support as well.