

---

# Oregon's Care Economy

The Case for Public Care Investment

Laura Dresser, Associate Director, COWS, UW Madison

[ldresser@cows.org](mailto:ldresser@cows.org)

# Seeing the Invisible, Valuing Care

- Oregon's paid care workforce consists of more than 70,000 workers at any one moment in time, and is expected to grow rapidly as our population ages.
- Earning roughly \$10 per hour, paid caregivers—nearly all women and disproportionately women of color—are seriously underpaid for the essential work that they do and the skills they bring. Far too many must rely on public benefits like food stamps just to make ends meet.



# Wages & Job Characteristics



## In Home Health Services

(working for agencies)

**\$10.93/hr**  
median wage

**37%**

have health insurance through work



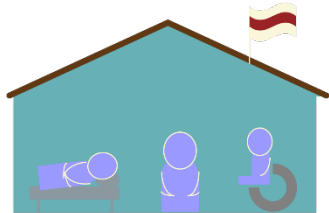
## In Private Household Services

(working directly for clients)

**\$9.34/hr**  
median wage

**30.7%**

have health insurance through work



## In Long Term Care

(nursing homes & residential care facilities)

**\$10.81/hr**  
median wage

**48.9%**

have health insurance through work



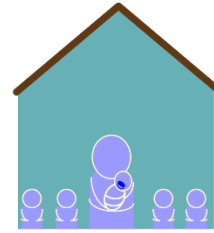
## Child Care Workers

(providing care in clients' homes, ie. 'nannies')

**\$9.77/hr**  
median wage

**30.5%**

have health insurance through work



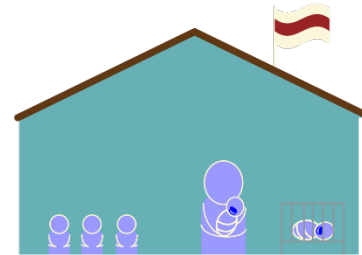
## Family Child Care Providers

(care for children brought to provider's home)

**\$5.58/hr**  
median wage

**27.5%**

have health insurance through work



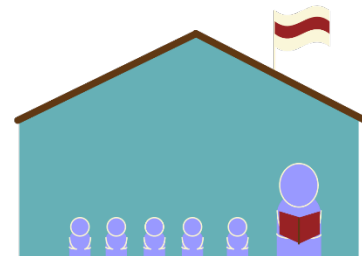
## Child Care Workers

(at child care centers)

**\$9.30/hr**  
median wage

**45.3%**

have health insurance through work



## Preschool Teachers

(in child care centers, does not include schools)

**\$11.07/hr**  
median wage

**59.9%**

have health insurance through work

---

*“I recently left one of the most highly regarded child care centers where I had been working for several years. I started out as a student and over time advanced in position. I was eventually offered a permanent job. Unfortunately, even though I’d hoped early childhood development was the career path for me, I had to turn the offer down because I would not have made enough money to support myself. Every other staff member that I knew there needed a second income to be able to support their family. If we expect to have well trained professionals coming in to this field then we need to make it a more desirable field including decent compensation. This is not babysitting. We need to change the mindset to understand quality childcare is curriculum based, intentional education. Improving pay for childcare providers would go a long way toward creating greater stability for the workers and for the families they serve.”*

- Lindsay

*Key Finding: Oregon's care workforce—including child care workers and direct care workers supporting seniors and people with physical and developmental disabilities—numbers 70,000 and is growing rapidly. Earning roughly \$10 per hour, these workers—nearly all women and disproportionately women of color—are seriously underpaid for the essential work that they do. Only a substantial public commitment to these workers and a significant public investment in their jobs will make decent care and decent jobs a reality.*



# Stress is Evident in the Care Economy

- High care costs
- High workforce turnover
- Unmet needs

\$14,000

price per year for infant care in Oregon (2014), which means...



51%

of median income for the average single parent family needed for infant care costs



15%

of median income for the average two-parent family needed for infant care costs

# The Economic Case for Greater Investment Care



Care investments generate stronger economic growth; strengthen families and communities; and promote equity.

# Toward a Stronger Care Economy

Key elements of a new care economy in Oregon will certainly include:

- Supporting families by providing income so they can focus on care when needs are most intense.
- Making high quality senior care and child care truly affordable and broadly accessible.
- Supporting additional training for care providers, while substantially improving the wages and benefits of all types of care workers.

