

Rep Helt and Gov Brown,

I am a resident of Deschutes County in Bend Oregon. The last several months during the pandemic and quarantine have been difficult for my family. I'm writing today to specifically talk about childcare. I have a four year old daughter who was attending a daycare until mid-March. My wife and I pulled our child and along with another family chose to do a "double-bubble" to share care one day a week between us. All four parents work and so we trade off days and every fourth week one of us will take two days. After three months of this we're understandably tired.

Our daycare is in fact open. During the pandemic they've been using their limited openings to help families of first responders and often their older children. They've been operating under the Oregon guidelines for reduced class sizes leaving the remaining families to manage care for themselves. While the PPP loans have helped the daycare and reduced the payment obligation for parents not attending it really hasn't addressed the underlying need: parents need childcare. Unfortunately for us the Phase 1 and Phase 2 re-opening guidelines had no exceptions for increased class sizes. This leads us to believe that us parents will be managing childcare out until Phase 3 which we are all guessing is in September when regular schools open up.

Deschutes county before the pandemic was already in need of more childcare. I was told that there are 8 kids for every one childcare opening in the county. I remember vividly trying to find a spot for my child 9 months before she was accepted to a program and how hard that was on me and my family during that time. Certainly there is a greater need now more than ever for childcare, especially for kids in the pre-K age group. Is there something that can be done? With day camps slowly opening up as well as gyms and playgrounds it feels like we're already explicitly saying that some activities are safer. Is childcare one of them and if not can we at least explain to parents why it's not being considered or discussed? Not knowing what the future looks like is a worse kind of stress than having some plan or guideline that we can look to.

My family is reaching out hoping that you'll help represent the needs of parents like us. Families with kids in pre-K need more information, reassurance, and some help if daycares are not reopening. What can you do to help us?

Thanks for your time. I appreciate the work you're doing during this tough time.

Best,
Chris Gilmer
Bend, Oregon