

June 30th, 2020

To: The Oregon State Child Care Task Force  
From: Tomford, Verelle  
Re: Impacts of COVID-19 on child care in Oregon

Dear Co-Chairs Senator Taylor and Representative Power,

My name is Verelle Tomford and I live in Portland.

When I became pregnant with my first child, I had just started my business as a freelance graphic designer. We prepared in all the ways that our community told us to: took birthing classes, decked out the nursery, baby-proofed. We even opened an Oregon College Savings Plan. What we weren't told and did not plan for was daycare and preschool costing more than a college tuition.

We now have two children, ages 1 and 4. While they were in daycare and preschool, we were paying over \$3,000 a month for tuition.

Unfortunately, when Covid-19 hit, I lost most of my work (my customers are primarily in the retail and events industries). Within a few weeks, my son's daycare had closed permanently. When it came time to send back, we had the option of sending him to our daughter's center, but we could no longer afford the tuition, given that I am not bringing in an income and my unemployment claim has not yet been processed.

It was painful emotionally, to have to give up a spot at a place where our daughter was thriving and we had a great relationship with the teachers. It was also painful financially as we had paid a \$60 waitlist fee to get her that spot, as well as a \$400 enrollment fee just 6 months prior.

I'm now in a situation of caring for my kids full-time. It leaves me very little time to find the new customers I would need to regain work right now. But even if I found work, it would be nearly impossible to find a daycare and preschool spot for my children, given how competitive those spots are.

I find myself in the spot that so many women are finding themselves in right now: sacrificing my career opportunities to provide care for our children through this pandemic, and worrying about the long-term effects of this on my career.

Paying more than the amount of two college tuitions for our two children wasn't working for us before the pandemic started. And it won't work for any low or middle-income families after the pandemic is over. We need Universal Child Care NOW!

Sincerely,

Verelle Tomford