

June 30th, 2020

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

Dear Co-Chairs Senator Taylor and Representative Power,

My name is Sarah Crozier and I live in Newberg. My husband and I have owned and operated Mi Escuelita Bilingual Preschool and Childcare for 13 years. Our program consists of two 5-Star Sparks rated certified family child care homes, one serving ages 0-3 and another serving children 3-13. I know that you will hear many passionate speakers here today that are committed to the health and safety of our children, I share their concerns and echo their sentiments. I am here today as an employer and as a business owner. Our programs have been open since the beginning of this emergency situation. We have many families we serve that provide vital and essential services to our community. We are constantly struggling to balance the developmentally appropriate practices, ELD requirements, staffing and still maintain a viable business. One of the concerns that is pressing right now is our staffing and payroll. At the end of every day, we have three staff in three separate groups for nearly an hour for only 3 children, two of these children are siblings, but we cannot combine them because they are separate groups. We spend hours of extra time cleaning and sanitizing. We are tired and we are stretched! Typically summer time is when I can give staff time to be with their own families. We often combine groups and provide staff days or weeks to rest a bit from the rigors of the school year. That is not possible this year and many of my staff are actually working overtime to accommodate for the heavy work loads of cleaning and social distancing. In addition to increased payroll, huge amounts of funds are needed for cleaning supplies, PPE for our staff and procuring individual material for every child. I can no longer make one batch of play dough for a week and then we share it. I have to make 10, and we divide it into individual containers which are stored separate to prevent the spread of Covid-19. As you can imagine, all of this adds up to a very large deficit. As small business owners we have worked hard to access the assistance available, but due to the length of this crisis it will not be enough. Our options are beginning to reach their limit as we look to the Fall and the continued need for small groups, limits on enrollment, individual materials and increased supplies. The decisions we are met with should not just be either to close our business or raise the rates for families already struggling during this time. I urge this committee to consider a comprehensive plan. Do not just put a temporary band-aid and expect that this will support Oregon child care providers and families! What we need now is leaders who are willing to do things outside the box and to take a stand for Oregon's children.