

February 20th, 2019

To: The House Housing and Human Services Committee

From: Katy Liljeholm,

Re: Support of HB 2346, HB 2348, and HB 2024

Dear Chair Keny Guyer,

My name is Katy Liljeholm and I live in Portland.

Becoming the director of an arts non-profit was one of the proudest moments of my life. As is the case with so many women working in social good organizations, my position was radically underfunded. Which meant that when my husband and I adopted a 15 month old and a 16 month old at the same time, one of the other proudest moments of my life, neither our family nor my nonprofit had the resources to weather the change. We literally had one week to prepare. We couldn't afford to lose money on me working, which is something too many families have to say. It wasn't possible to run the nonprofit while I was parenting two young babies. I had to quit my job. The nonprofit failed soon after. We adopted a newborn child when one of our sons had a birth brother. After about a year, I was able to find two part-time positions that just barely covered the cost of childcare for three.

We get adoption assistance from the state, but it doesn't come close to covering child care costs. A nanny was cheaper than an in-home care facility, and we ended up paying a nanny and literally every dollar, every cent that I made.

But then I got sick, really sick, and I couldn't get a diagnosis, and I couldn't work full-time. But we needed the same amount of childcare. I still don't have a diagnosis which means I can't apply for disability yet. There is no safety-net for my family. Figuring out what was going to happen to my children is a constant worry and when adopted children have to constantly change caregivers, it can be really painful and damaging. This problem has an impact for generations, because it impacts not only my wellbeing as a person, but also, my efforts as a parent.

Our two older kids, because of their needs, ended up in a high quality preschool but it cost more than our mortgage and we still needed a nanny during the day for the baby and for wrap around care with the two older ones. I started graduate school online and it's the student loans that have helped us get through my medical crisis and our child care crises. That's an unsustainable solution. A few years from now, potentially, we'll be in the same financial straits, but in more, risky debt.

In order to give my sons care that meets their needs and a preschool that supported them, our childcare costs more than a second mortgage. We hoped that once they got to public school, the financial burden would ease. But with after school care, plus preschool costs for my youngest, we still pay double our mortgage. The pay gap, complications from adoption, and illness all served to destabilize my family in ways we couldn't control. I urge you not to let my family, and families like mine, fall through the cracks. Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely, Katy Liljeholm