

To: House Committee on Human Services and Housing

From: Erin Jean O'Regan, Art4Life

Date:2/17/2020

RE: Support for SB 1518- Conditional Enrollment in the Central Background Registry

Dear Chair Keny Guyer and Members of the House Committee on Human Services and Housing

I've been working in licensed school age child care in Portland for 16 years. My background is in education and I have great pride in working for a small non profit arts based program that cares for and facilitates cultural education for Elementary school aged kids in five Portland Public Schools. In the 20 years that I've lived here, the job market has shifted, and finding part-time employees has become a struggle. And to compound an already tough situation, provisions regarding the Central Background Registry for new employees who are required to be enrolled by the office of Child Care has made it increasingly more difficult to onboard and train new employees in a timely manner.

Due to changes enforced as of July 1, 2019, newly hired staff are having to wait anywhere from three weeks to three months to have their in-state, FBI and out-of-state background checks completed in order to begin their work caring for children. That wait time directly affects the children by decreasing the amount of staff working with the kids especially at the start of the school year - a tough transition for a lot of kids.

The change that has been most impactful is the exemption of "conditional enrollment" for out-of-state applicants/new hires which impedes them from being able to work. According to the new legislation, once hired, these staff cannot be considered "staff in training" and are not allowed on-site at all, even when supervised and not included in the state-mandated 1 teacher per 15 children ratio. Can you imagine- you are hired for a part-time position working with children after school and you cannot actually start your job for 3- 12 weeks?

While we agree that having all employees registered in the Central Background Registry is imperative, the systems in place are discriminatory and unnecessarily long.

There is an elevated demand for child care programs after school in Portland. Most of our sites have waiting lists of families who need additional care and the timelines for being able to have qualified staff start working is impacting our ability to increase capacities fast enough to match demand. Please help us by voting to pass Senate Bill 1518 and modify provisions relating to criminal records checks performed by the Department of Human Services and Oregon Health Authority.

Sincerely,

Erin Jean O'Regan