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FROM THE DESK OF:

LISA REYNOLDS, MD
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
District 36



**Child Care
for Oregon**

Child Care That Works. For Every Family.

RE: HB 3073B - Child Care Funding

What would a good child care system in Oregon look like for parents and providers?

By Lydia Gray-Holifield and Angie Garcia

As a parent and child care provider who have both been long-time advocates for affordable and accessible child care across the state, we are excited to finally see momentum finally happening in Oregon and nationally.

COVID-19 has made everyone aware of what parents and providers in Oregon have known for a long time: our child care system doesn't work. Now, we have an opportunity to redefine how we care for our communities and our children. As we design our child care infrastructure, lawmakers must put the voices, experiences, and needs of mothers and providers of color like us first.

Women and caregivers who are Black, Brown, and/or Indigenous are the most impacted and least served when it comes to child care policy. The lack of public investment in a comprehensive child care system is a systemic problem rooted in racism, sexism, and the country's history of exploiting our care labor.

When Oregon's current child care system was built, it was informed by all the wrong things: that child care is not essential work to the rest of our economy that deserves high wages; the idea that a system could be built off a model where parents pay the majority of the cost through private tuition; the expectation that child care assistance should be means-tested, temporary and only for working hours; an assumption that higher-quality care is the kind provided outside a family or only within a dominant, White cultural framework; and the false notion that parents should be self-sufficient and that care of our community's children is a personal problem.

Child care is essential not just to our economy, but to our communities. We cannot have strong, vibrant, and healthy neighborhoods and families if we do not invest in our youngest Oregonians.

As we look at bills being introduced in Oregon and nationally, we need to ask ourselves if they meet the following criteria:

- Developed in ways that support parents' needs and considers their economic security and well-being, and is flexible enough regardless of income, employment, language, and other needs; especially for

mothers who identify as Black, Brown, and/or Indigenous, immigrant mothers, and low-income mothers.

- Accessible to all families with children ages 0-13, including care for some families who need care for older children and young adults; with targeted focus on prioritizing the needs of children, families and providers who identify as Black, Brown, and/or Indigenous.
- Produces equitable outcomes for all children and families and is developed with a disability justice lens.
- Accountable to and governed by the parents and providers who most need it.
- Be affordable or free to families and offered all days and times families need it.
- Be safe and support a child's social, emotional, cognitive, and physical health and development. Culturally appropriate/reflective/safe and offered in languages families speak.
- Be inclusive of all provider types and offered in a variety of settings that fits every family and child's needs.
- Ensure providers are paid a living wage that considers the difficulty of work, experience and education. Provide training and services that support workforce development and that is offered to all provider types.
- Be accessible through "one-door" and easy to navigate for parents, providers, community navigators, case managers, etc. (application process; streamlined; no-barriers)

This is a long list, but it's an important one. We have an opportunity right now to do things right—especially with an influx of federal funds and a historically bright economic forecast.

Oregon's HB 3073 gets us much closer to the type of child care we desperately need in Oregon. One that is affordable and accessible for parents, meaningful for providers, and beneficial for our communities' kids. Oregon lawmakers should give this bill their support so that we can utilize the influx of American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) dollars coming into our state efficiently and effectively.



Angie Garcia, MSW is the owner and multi-site director of Escuela Viva, a child care community located in Portland, Oregon. She is the proud granddaughter of migrant workers from Fabens, Texas and a graduate of Portland State University. Angie started Escuela Viva in the basement of her home in 2004 when she had her first child and could not find an early childhood program for her. She serves on the implementation advisory group for Multnomah County's Preschool for All program.



Lydia Gray-Holifield is a mother and Parent Leader for the Early Learning Multnomah Parent Accountability Council and a national leader on Early Childhood Learning and Innovation Network for Communities' (EC-LINC) Parent Leadership Network. She was a founding member and advocate of the Preschool for All initiative that led to the passage of Measure 26-214 and establishment of universal preschool for all 3- and 4-year-olds in Multnomah County. She has over fifteen years experience shaping policy on preschool for all and 12+ years of demonstrated strong community leadership around wellness education, training and support.