

April 21st, 2021

To: The Joint Committee on Ways and Means  
From: Jessica M. Harrison, PhD(c) LCSW  
Re: Childcare funding

Dear Co-Chairs Betsy Johnson, Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, and Dan Rayfield,

My name is Jessica Harrison and I live in Portland. I have worked as a Mental Health Clinician in our community since 2008, and I specialize in providing care to parents of infants and young children. I am also a social scientist who researches gender-based oppression in the United States.

Through my multifaceted work, I have gained tremendous clarity about the conditions that are required for workers and families to thrive in a society, such as living wages, stable work, high quality affordable childcare, and safety for themselves and their children. As a clinician, I witness pervasive stress associated with inflexible work schedules, low wages, and inaccessible (non-existent or unaffordable) childcare. Additionally, the COVID-19 global pandemic has exacerbated existing stratifications throughout society, predominantly impacting women who are most negatively impacted by the economic downturn as both workers and parents.

Importantly, much of the depression and anxiety I address in my practice is triggered or exacerbated by the unreasonable demands placed on workers and parents to solve problems that are vastly out of their scope to solve as individuals. Of course, this impacts women most of all, whose paid labor tends to be poorly compensated and unpredictable and is coupled with primary caregiving responsibilities at home. Sadly, depression and anxiety are unsurprising outcomes of the insurmountable stress of living in under-resourced communities with few social safety nets.

Thus, I am writing this letter to you today to emphasize the fact that social policy, like HB 3073, is prevention. With this bill, we have an opportunity to prevent emotional distress, improve mental health, and create more equitable communities where citizens can thrive. I strongly encourage you to support HB 3073 and protect current ERDC investments as a starting point.

Sincerely,

Jessica M. Harrison