

**April 21, 2021**

To: Joint Committee on Ways & Means

From: Michelle Hicks, Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO) member

**Re: Child Care Funding and HB 3073**

Dear Tri-Chairs Johnson, Steiner-Hayward, and Rayfield and Members of the Committee:

My name is Michelle Hicks and I use she/hers pronouns and I live in House District 46, which sits on the traditional lands of the Multnomah, Kathlamet, Tualatin Kalapuya, Wasco, Cowlitz, Clackamas, Bands of Chinook, Mollala and many other tribes who made their homes along the Columbia River.

I am writing to offer my unequivocal support to keep childcare subsidy programs like the ERDC (Employment Related Daycare) fully funded because the child care crisis that existed before the COVID-19 pandemic is now a state of emergency for parents, providers, and kids across Oregon.

As a second generation Korean American, my daycare was my aunties' houses. Like many other BIPOC families, they took care of me as my parents were at work. They were the ones who taught me to cook, clean, study and more. I was lucky enough to be raised by a community of caring and supportive Korean women. Now that I am older and many of my community are the essential workers carrying us through the COVID 19 pandemic, I take care of young kids in my family when I can while their parents are working.

The reality of our current childcare system is that it is based on the **unpaid or underpaid labor of women of color and women in general** who are often themselves essential workers or working mothers who do not have time to figure out a complicated government website, who don't have the money to pay for a childcare provider during the pandemic, who do not have the luxury to pay for an expensive daycare.

Everyday working communities like mine **need HB 3073 and the full funding of Childcare programs** because it streamlines governance by housing our state's child care subsidy program with other early learning and child care programs. This realignment is going to allow for a more seamless coordination and coverage of services between ERDC and other programs like Preschool Promise and Early Head

Start. It will also reform ERDC into a child care assistance program that actually serves low-income and BIPOC families, as well as providing compensation that the child care business owners and educators—predominantly women and BIPOC women—who perform this critical work need.

Our communities cannot afford any cuts to the ERDC program, especially in the midst of an ongoing pandemic when childcare has been especially exacerbated and people have been disproportionately affected. Providers should be competitively and properly compensated for their work, and families should have access to high-quality, affordable, and culturally relevant childcare when we need it now more than ever before. Childcare affects not only us in this moment but generations of children to come and we cannot afford to underfund these crucial programs.

I urge you to pass HB 3073 to take a small step in securing the funding our child care system needs.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Michelle M. Hicks

APANO member and HD 46 resident