

TO: House Committee on Rules
FROM: Matt Newell-Ching, Oregon Food Bank
RE: Support for HB 3073A-4 to make child care more affordable and equitable
DATE: April 26, 2021



Chair Smith Warner, Co-Chairs Drazan and Holvey, and members of the committee,

Oregon Food Bank's mission is to eliminate hunger and its root causes. Prior to the pandemic, 1 in 11 Oregonians were food insecure. **Today, nearly 1 in 5 Oregonians face hunger.**

Safe, affordable child care is critical for a family's ability to earn a livelihood and put food on the table. **Oregon Food Bank supports HB 3073A with the -4 Amendment because Oregonians faced a child care crisis prior to the pandemic, and now we face a state of emergency.**

More than 50% of Oregon's pre-COVID child care slots are gone. And 40% of providers are closed, unlikely to ever reopen. The economic impacts of COVID-19 on women has been sustained throughout the pandemic. In December, about 2 in 5 unemployed women had been out of work for 6 months or longer, including about 41% of Black women, 38% of Latinas, and 44% of Asian women. If we don't act now, we face generational setbacks.

Even in the best of times, access to child care was out of reach for too many Oregonians. A minimum-wage worker in rural Oregon would need to work full time for nearly 34 weeks, or from January to August, just to pay for child care for one infant.

Despite how unaffordable child care is for most parents, child care providers (who are disproportionately Black, Indigenous, and women of color) are among the lowest-paid workers in Oregon. In 2018, the median wage of preschool teachers, many of whom are college-educated, was \$13.95 an hour, and was \$11.86 for child care workers in Oregon. Child care is essential work that makes all other work possible—and yet, **wages for child care workers are so low that 53% participate in one or more public benefits such as SNAP.**

HB 3073A-4 makes important reforms to Employment-Related Day Care (ERDC) including:

- Capping copays to no more than 7% of a family's income.
- Increasing the flexibility of child care assistance outside of just working hours.
- Compensating child care providers more fairly.
- Expanding access to all children, regardless of documentation status.
- Coordinating programs relating to early learning in one state department.

We have the opportunity to rebuild and emerge stronger so that we can end hunger and build economic security for our *all* in our communities. We urge swift passage of HB 3073A-4.

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