

TO: House Committee on Early Childhood
FROM: Matt Newell-Ching, Oregon Food Bank
RE: Support for HB 2503 to make child care more affordable and equitable
DATE: February 15, 2021



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.**

Having 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 2503 because our communities faced a child care crisis prior to the pandemic, and now 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 are facing decades of setbacks for women's economic security with the largest burden placed on women who identify as Black, Indigenous, and/or other people of color (BIPOC).

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 2503 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.

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.

Oregon Food Bank
Headquarters /
Metro Services
7900 NE 33rd Drive
Portland, OR 97211
503-282-0555

Oregon Food Bank
Washington County
Services
1870 NW 173rd Ave
Beaverton, OR 97006
503-439-6510

Oregon Food Bank
Tillamook County
Services
PO Box 1344
Tillamook, OR 97141
503-842-3154

Oregon Food Bank
Southeast Oregon
Services
773 S Oregon Street
Ontario, OR 97914
541-889-9206

Columbia Gorge
Food Bank
3610 Crates Way
The Dalles, OR 97058
541-370-2333

