



Testimony in Support of HB 2503 & HB 3073
UFCW Local 555
February 22, 2021

Chair Power, Vice Chairs Reynolds and Zika, and Members of the Committee:

United Food and Commercial Workers Local 555 would like to thank you for the opportunity today to testify in strong support of House Bills 2503 and 3073.

UFCW Local 555 is over 25,000 workers strong in Oregon in Southwest Washington, and the largest private sector labor union in Oregon. We are a diverse group of workers who take pride in acting as a strong collective voice for working people. Our members come from a number of industries, including grocery, retail, food processing, and healthcare.

We believe that every Oregon family deserves access to high quality, affordable, and culturally relevant child care, and every child care provider should be paid a wage that reflects the essential work they do. We can take the first steps to get there with House Bills 2503 and 3073.

COVID-19 has laid bare the insufficiencies of our current child care system. It will take a long-term, sustained effort to rebuild a child care system that truly works for all our families. In the meantime, we can start with House Bills 3073 and 2503, which will:

- **Streamline governance by housing our state’s child care subsidy program, Employment Related Day Care (ERDC), with other early learning and child care programs.** This realignment will allow for a more seamless coordination and coverage of services between ERDC and other programs like Preschool Promise and Early Head Start. It also allows the state to be strategic about purchasing child care to rebuild the sector after devastating losses during the pandemic.
- **Reform ERDC into a child care assistance program that better serves low-income and BIPOC families,** as well as providing fair compensation for the child care business owners and educators—predominantly women and BIPOC women—who perform this critical work.

Working families across Oregon face an ongoing child care crisis that has only been worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic. Essential frontline workers often struggle the most to find child care: many are among the 350,000 Oregonians whose jobs can’t be done from home. Finding child care was a challenge before the pandemic, and with 50% of pre-COVID childcare spots gone, many parents have had no choice but to leave the workforce.

Working mothers are bearing the brunt of the crisis. In December 2020, almost all jobs lost in the United States were women’s jobs, with women losing 156,000 jobs and men gaining 16,000. The COVID impacts of job loss hit Black and Latinx women more aggressively: between January and December 2020, nearly 2.1 million women left the labor force, including 564,000 Black women and 317,000 Latinas.

Essential workers often face unique challenges in finding childcare. For many, irregular work schedules mean they must limit their availability to when they can currently access childcare, and may not get scheduled for the hours they need to support their families. Others must scramble every week to coordinate child care because they don’t have a stable provider to depend on.

Every Oregon family deserves access to high quality, affordable, and culturally relevant child care, and every child care provider should be paid a wage that reflects the essential work they do. We can take the first steps to get there with House Bills 2503 and 3073. UFCW Local 555 urges your support for these important bills.

Sincerely,

Thomas Mosher,
Director, Government and Public Affairs,
UFCW Local 555