

Hello,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide (virtual) testimony in support of House Bills 2503 and 3073.

I would like to tell you a little bit about my experience with childcare on the North Coast in Tillamook County.

1) I have been a parent struggling to find quality child care.

Where I live, there is a major crisis in terms of access to child care. We live in a "child care desert" where there simply are not enough providers. I have been in situations where there are no available childcare providers of any kind (let alone quality choices in providers) within an hour drive from where I live. Being that Tillamook County is rural, we face added challenges compared to many urban areas, however a lack of childcare providers seems to plague the entire state, including both rural and urban areas. A major overhaul of the way we think about this critical service needs to be undertaken immediately. If parents do not have childcare, the ripple effects creep into all aspects of society. Child care is necessary for joyful children, thriving families, and a strong economy.

2) I have been a childcare provider helping struggling parents fill in the gaps.

I have known numerous families who have not been able to find childcare at all, but for each of those, I have found others unable to afford childcare costs. I have helped some families pool resources and have provided high-quality care for their children. These families have (in many cases) two parents working full time, struggling to make ends meet. Many could not afford to pay what child care is worth, and paid what they were able to. They were grateful to have me as a support, however in the event I became sick or had to cancel, these parents were left with nowhere to go. This is not sustainable.

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 steps in the right direction with House Bills 2503 and 3073. I urge your support for these important bills.

3) My stories are pre-COVID. Post-COVID, it is clearer than ever that this is an issue of Equity.

Everything I described above is pre-COVID. I am not providing care for others currently, and have my kids home with me safely attending school virtually, while we balance life in the background of zoom calls, business meetings, etc. If I had a job that I needed to show up for in-person, I would not be able to and would need to quit or risk being fired.

As I am sure you are aware, In December 2020, 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.

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) .

(<https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/December-Jobs-Day.pdf>)

Please take action now on this important issue and prioritize childcare reforms in Oregon. Families cannot wait!

Thank you for your time.

Annie Naranjo-Rivera