



Service Employees International Union Local 503

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 4005. My name is Tom Crawford, and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of SEIU Local 503 in support of House Bill 4005. SEIU represents more than 72,000 public sector workers and care providers in Oregon, including regulated subsidy child care providers (Friend, Family, Neighbor or FFN providers) and certain staff who support the Employment Related Daycare (ERDC) program at the Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) and the Early Learning Division (ELD).

Countless numbers of our members are also themselves parents, navigating Oregon's complicated childcare system and attempting to keep their children safe and healthy during this pandemic while they continue to report to work. It is from these intersecting perspectives that we come to you today.

SEIU 503 supports House Bill 4005 because we know that access to childcare is necessary for joyful children, thriving families, and a strong economy. The pandemic has made clear that without care work, no other work can happen. Childcare provides the necessary infrastructure for Oregon's essential workforce to continue to work, and we have seen the devastating impact on employment when parents could not find childcare, especially for mothers.

Childcare is primarily funded by families that cannot afford the true costs associated with care for children. While parents are unable to afford care, childcare providers are not charging enough to cover the costs to provide care, often subsidizing a lack of public investment in the system with their low wages. The current funding structure is unsustainable and as a result, every county in Oregon is a childcare desert for at least one age group of children.

Childcare workers are paid so poorly that 53% of them nationally rely on one or more public benefits, whether Food Stamps, Medicaid, EITC, or TANF.

Parents are scrambling to find reliable childcare options as they continue to work either from home or in their workplaces. Hardest hit are the 350,000 Oregonians (17% of the labor force) who do not work in occupations that allow them to work from home. Of the options that parents might have, not all of them meet their families' unique needs—like irregular work schedules or language spoken—and parents across the state often find themselves patching together care just so they can get to work.

The economic impacts of COVID-19 on women have 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 other people of color (BIPOC).

Research shows that investing in caregiving systems produces twice as many jobs per dollar invested than physical infrastructure investment.

SEIU believes strongly in supporting working Oregonian families by ensuring that they have the resources to make them successful both on and off the job. Making childcare affordable and accessible reduces the likelihood that someone will need to choose between missing work – costing them valuable income – or ensuring that their child is being looked after.

When the Oregon legislature passed House Bill 3073 in 2021, our state took the first essential steps to streamline administration of these necessary services, but there is still more work to be done in order to ensure that Oregon's childcare workforce that can meet the needs of Oregon's families during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. Childcare providers need additional support that rectifies the decades of financial scarcity they have experienced and that actually invests in building more childcare supply, in compensating our providers and educators better, and that grows the capacity of the new Department of Early Learning and Care. HB 4005 will:

Support providers and childcare affordability for subsidy-eligible families by increasing subsidy rates to the 90th percentile of the 2020 childcare market rate.

Support Oregon's childcare systems development through HB 3073 Implementation with increased capacity to stand up the new Department of Early Learning and Care.

Delay fire code requirements on in-home childcare providers to prioritize building new provider capacity while still keeping kids safe.

Additionally, we support increasing childcare capacity through investing in new provider grants, strengthening our state's Child Care Resource & Referral Centers, and direct relief payments to the childcare workforce. Without investing in new providers and helping existing providers expand, we are unable to meet current demands and will be even further behind when implementing new state, and likely federal, expanded eligibility to childcare subsidies.

Every Oregon family deserves access to high quality, affordable, and culturally relevant childcare, and every childcare provider should be paid a wage that reflects the essential work they do. SEIU urges your support for HB 4005.

Sincerely,

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He/Him/His
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