



## Testimony in Support of HB 4005

February 2, 2022

Dear Chair Power, Vice Chairs Reynolds and Zika, and members of the House Committee on Early Childhood:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. Oregon AFSCME Council 75 is writing in **support of House Bill 4005** — a key piece of the **2022 Child Care Investment Package** and a top priority for our union.

As the Executive Director of our union, I'm honored to represent over 33,000 workers in every corner of Oregon, including more than 2,100 family child care providers. In our union, we see the child care crisis from all sides. We represent parents who cannot find local, high-quality child care and we represent child care providers/business owners that struggle to stay open without the necessary support.

Our union is proudly supporting this child care legislation, because we know first-hand how important — and how unsupported — child care has become in our state. We all know child care isn't working. It doesn't work for providers and it doesn't work for parents.

Our union's family child care providers are the backbone of Oregon's child care system. They operate women-owned and BIPOC-owned small businesses across our state, offering child care that is culturally-relevant, child care in rural and underserved communities, and child care that operates 24/7 for around-the-clock workers. They are foundational for Oregon families and Oregon business to function — but they are struggling. An unprecedented amount of providers have had to shut their doors over the last two years.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, **more than a quarter of family child care providers** have closed shop — a substantial loss of critical local child care. Even before the pandemic, however, Oregon was in a child care crisis. The pandemic has only exacerbated an existing problem.

Limited access to child care has a devastating impact not only on child care providers, who are overstretched and underpaid, but on all Oregon families. A thriving child care infrastructure is **critical** to getting Oregon's essential workforce back to work. Without child care, parents — especially mothers — cannot go back to the jobs that make our economy and our families thrive. We get regular reports from union parents about their struggles to find child care.

It's time to fix this crisis. We cannot afford to put this on hold. HB 4005 offers an unprecedented opportunity to invest in Oregon's child care infrastructure and solve many of the mounting problems our providers and parents are facing.

With HB 4005, the Oregon Legislature has the opportunity to invest in child care in a few key ways. HB 4005 will:

- **Make child care more affordable for families by increasing subsidy rates**, creating more financial stability for providers and growing parent's purchasing power with their ERDC subsidy. This legislation sets the minimum for provider rates to 90% of the market rate — a substantial increase over the current contract and one that would help us retain the essential child care workers we're losing at alarming rates.
- **Grow child care supply with grants for new providers**. These grants would allow the state to build supply and bring new providers online — an investment that would attract more providers to a field that is desperately under capacity.
- **Continue our success in HB 3073** from the 2021 Regular Session, creating the DELC staffing necessary to ensure that ERDC works for all Oregon families.

Passing HB 4005 is an essential first step to streamlining our state's child care administration, building up our child care infrastructure, and paying our child care workforce a more deserving wage. We also need the Oregon Legislature to make the partner investments necessary to complete the 2022 Child Care Investment Package that this bill is a part of — investments that would also provide **one-time direct relief payments** and **capacity-building and expansion grants** for existing providers, who are desperate to keep open their doors, grow their businesses, and continue serving Oregon families.

Oregon families deserve access to high-quality, affordable, and culturally-relevant child care — in every corner of the state, and at every time of day. Oregon child care providers deserve income that reflects the essential work they do, and the support they need to grow, expand, and hire new staff. Oregon businesses, hospitals, agencies, facilities, schools, and organizations need a thriving workforce — one that is not bogged down by workers' inability to find quality care for their children. For these reasons, and so many others, **Oregon AFSCME Council 75 urges your support for HB 4005 and the Child Care Investment Package.**

Sincerely,

Stacy Chamberlain, Executive Director  
Oregon AFSCME Council 75