

Submitter: Amanda Contreras
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood
Measure: HB4005

Chair Power and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 4005. My name is Amanda Contreras, I live in Josephine County and I have been a child care provider for 2 years.

A quality childcare starts with childcare providers that can fully dedicate themselves to this profession. Many of us work two or three jobs to make ends meet, which means no time to train or have professional development. Providing living wages will keep providers in this field and encourage them to seek employment in the childcare industry. The pandemic shows us the importance of our work and the huge necessity to have quality childcare. Funding childcare is no longer an option and is a necessity. I would love to live on my own and open an in-home daycare, but with my current salary I cannot afford to do it.

I'm writing to support HB 4005 because I know that access to child care 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.

As an ERDC provider, it was a great challenge to keep providing childcare and getting paid. My sister lost her job due to Covid and after being out of the ERDC program, it was a nightmare to get back. I kept supporting her by providing childcare for her while she was looking for work, but how many parents didn't have this luxury, if they are not working, they don't have childcare, but without childcare how they can look for work. I lost many months of payment because the system had many errors and delays, which caused similar situations to push many of the childcare providers to look for different sources of employment. The lack of resources during the pandemic were extremely hurtful for ERDC providers, we tried to be teachers, counselors, experts in behavioral issues without training. The system left us behind, which put in jeopardy many kids who depend on this program and couldn't have access to it.

HB 4005 will:

Support providers and child care affordability for subsidy-eligible families by increasing subsidy rates to the 90th percentile of the 2020 child care market rate. Support Oregon's child care 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 child care providers to prioritize building

new provider capacity while still keeping kids safe.

The root cause of childcare providers leaving this profession is due to lack of living wages that will help them to do what they love to do, which is care for the children. The way under child care market rates ERDC providers received shows providers that their work is undervalued and unnecessary. Childcare is a profession that needs to be well funded to create quality child care providers that are looking to stay in this field until retirement and beyond. I can see myself working a long time in this field if I can afford to make ends meet and have opportunities to open my own in-home daycare.

Our state cannot afford to not invest in child care, especially in the midst of an ongoing pandemic. Providers should be properly compensated for their work, and families should have access to high-quality, affordable, and culturally relevant childcare. Please invest in child care and support HB 4005.

Parents need the peace of mind that their providers have enough funding and resources to be safe, and providers need a clear plan and to be properly compensated. I urge you to pass HB 4005 to take a small step in securing the funding our child care system needs.

It's time for the Legislature to recognize that a government-funded childcare infrastructure would benefit not just working parents, but also the childcare providers who struggle to stay financially afloat while providing essential services that are the backbone of our economy. Please support HB 4005.

Thank you,
Amanda Contreras