

February 2, 2022

To: House Committee on Early Childhood  
From: Leticia Huacal-Magana, Washington County  
Re: Child Care and HB 4005

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 Leticia Huacal-Magana, I live in Washington County and I have been a child care provider for 15 years.

As an ERDC childcare provider, I'd faced the stigma that ERDC providers are babysitters rather than childcare providers. This stigma is based on the rates we receive, which has made some families believe that our care is of lower quality. Nonetheless, as a license exempt child care providers, we are the entrance to the education of the children under our care, we are their first teachers. Investing in us is investing in the children's future that are under our care. During the pandemic, the lack of resources and support fell strongly because there were not enough resources to train us and support us to address the challenges we were facing. The disinformation about resources for license exempt and license childcare providers play an important role in the retention of active childcare providers during the pandemic. In order to provide a childcare service of quality, it is needed a strong investment that goes directly to living wages rates, training, and resources to open more in-home care childcare centers.

I'm writing to support HB 4005 because I 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.

The outdated refer system for childcare services has made believe to the parents that the only childcare service of quality is the institutional. However, parents who lost their childcare services when the center where I worked closed, they reached out to me to find a way to keep providing care and they found out that the ERDC program can help to alleviate more of their childcare needs and find quality childcare services. Nonetheless, the challenge to provide quality care without the support needed from the ERDC program has pushed providers to work extra hard to overcome the lack of support. Usually, the way an ERDC provider receives another kid to take care is by family's referral rather than the childcare system. This referral system makes it very hard for families to access our services, leaving families and in-home childcare centers close to each other without connecting because there is not an adequate childcare referral system. This situation creates long waiting list for some childcare centers, while others leave the childcare industry because they cannot fill their available spots. During the pandemic these inefficiencies in the system were extremely noticeable, which left many

families without access to quality childcare services or waiting to be approved to receive financial support to pay childcare services.

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.

As an in-home care childcare provider, I see it as a fundamental necessity to heavily invest in childcare to have quality childcare services. This is a profession that needs to be rewarded adequately with living wages that will support childcare providers to have a professional development to teach, care, and mentor the new generations of citizens. Early education starts with the childcare providers. However, if we don't have the necessary resources, the quality of this education will be diminished due to the lack of tools needed for the job, not for the childcare provider that we leave our hearts in this profession.

- 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.

Sincerely,

Leticia Huacal-Magana