

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:

My name is Autumn David, I am the president for AFSCME Local 132 Child Care Providers Together. I am a certified family child care provider in Salem and have been in business for 25 years. We are a 5-star rated program. We serve low-income families that are part of Preschool Promise and ERDC. We also serve many children from the Pacific Island community, as my husband is from there.

I worked in the banking industry until my youngest daughter was born. I decided to become a child care provider after she was born because at the time, I could not afford to have two children in care. A few years later I went back to school and graduated with a degree in juvenile criminal justice. After graduation and interning at the youth correctional facility, I decided it was more important to help young children make a difference so they would not end up there. This was the time when I decided to make child care my career.

I have had hundreds of families through my program over the years. Over my career, I have mostly served low-income families on subsidy. Some of the children and families I have served have become our family. I currently am employing one of my child care children that came to me when she was 4. She is now 22 and working for me. Providers are important and the stability for these children is our passion.

I have grown my business from one employee to four employees. Two of my staff are from the Pacific Islands and from a remote island that is underdeveloped; it has no internet, no cars, and can go months without contact to the world. I feel this is important to the community we serve as we are able to talk to many islanders about what preschool is and how important it is to their children.

My work as a child care provider has been rewarding, but there are also a lot of challenges in continuing to provide care. One of these challenges I would like to share is the inability to afford health care and low child care payments. Currently my husband and I are paying \$1560 a month in premium through the market place. We have very high deductibles which makes it hard to be able to get routine care. It is important that providers have higher child care payments and access to health care.

Another challenge has been Preschool Promise and ORDHS rates. I know over the last two years providers have been stretched to the max through this pandemic. Ever-changing rules and guidance seem to keep coming down to us from the Early Learning Division and other agencies. We have had to juggle extreme changes in our

program to meet each change. Because of the pandemic, we have had to endure more expenses without any extra pay.

We are also seeing children affected by the pandemic as well. We are seeing many more children with speech delays and challenging behaviors stemming from the change in life. For example, in our program right now, I am employing four staff just to keep my program the high quality like my children deserve. Where does this money come from? It comes out of my own savings and retirement. Licensing requires us to have two staff, but due to additional needs of children in our care, we are needing four at this moment. We get no help for children with special needs financially, nor services that help. If you look at the ORDHS rates, the pay gap between providers in different areas is astounding. Unfortunately, I live in rate area B which is hundreds of dollars per child less than rate area A. I am struggling to keep afloat financially.

I am asking to look into the challenges providers like me are having to keep our business open. While House Bill 4005 doesn't solve all of these challenges, it is a huge and critical step toward improving the ability for child care providers, like myself, to continue to provide high quality care in my area. I love my job, children, and families that we serve. Please look into affordable health care for providers, higher pay rate for children with extra needs in order to employ more staff and keep our programs high quality. Please look at the pay gap between all the providers in our state. We deserve equal pay for the same job we are all doing no matter where we live. Lastly, please vote yes on HB 4005 and the investment package as the first step in addressing the challenges facing child care providers and families.

Thank you,

Autumn David