

Farmworkers and Latinx Families United
Testimony in Support of HB 4005
Martha Sonato
February 2, 2022

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 Martha Sonato and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of PCUN, Oregon's Farmworker Union.

We are writing to offer support for House Bill 4005 because we 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. Child care 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 child care, especially for mothers.

Farmworkers are among the poorest workers in Oregon, making about 28,900K a year (U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics 2020). Hazardous conditions are routine, including pesticide exposure, extreme heat and lack of shade and adequate clean drinking water.

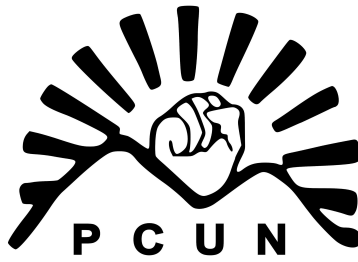
Even though affordable, culturally responsive and comprehensive child care is often out of reach for our members, child care providers--who are disproportionately Black, Indigenous, and women of color--are also among the lowest-paid workers in Oregon. In 2018, the median wage of preschool teachers was \$13.95 an hour, and was \$11.86 for child care workers in Oregon.¹ This year has made even clearer how essential child care is—it is essential work that makes all other work possible—and yet, we do not compensate providers accordingly.

Child care is primarily funded by families that cannot afford the true costs associated with care for children. While parents are unable to afford care, child care 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 child care desert for at least one age group of children².

In 2021, the legislature passed HB 3073 which responded to the state's child care crisis and provided immediate and long-term relief to Oregon families most in need of child care by establishing the Department of Early Learning and Care (DELIC) as an independent agency, consolidating child care

¹ <https://familyforwardoregon.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/FFO-Child-Care-Report-2019-REV.pdf>

² <https://health.oregonstate.edu/sites/health.oregonstate.edu/files/early-learners/pdf/oregon-child-care-deserts-01-29-2019.pdf>



and early learning administration, and by making needed reforms to the state's child care subsidy program: Employment Related Day Care (ERDC).

These were essential first steps to streamline our state's administration, but more is needed to ensure we have a child care workforce that can meet the needs of Oregon's families during and beyond the pandemic. Child care providers need additional support that rectifies the decades of financial scarcity they have experienced and that actually invests in building more child care 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 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.

Additionally, we support increasing child care slots through investing in new provider grants, strengthening our state's Child Care Resource & Referral Centers, and direct relief payments to the child care 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 child care subsidies.

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

Sincerely,

Martha Sonato
Political Director, PCUN