



Date: February 20, 2023
To: House Committee Early Childhood and Human Services
From: Stephanie Phillips Bridges, Policy Analyst for the Urban League of Portland
Re: Support for Invest in Early Childhood and Child Care - Support Child Care Workforce Development, HB 3029
Chair Reynolds, Vice-Chair Nguyen, Vice-Chair Scharf, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Stephanie Phillips Bridges, and I am a Policy Analyst with the Urban League of Portland and I respectfully submit this testimony in support of House Bill 3029. The Urban League of Portland is one of Oregon's oldest civil rights and social service organizations, empowering African Americans and others to achieve equality in education, employment, health, economic security, and quality of life across Oregon and SW Washington.

Child care workers, often women, and Black and Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) are routinely tasked with meeting working families' child care needs, are leaving the profession in droves; this has been further exacerbated by the pandemic as we have seen nationally. For example, in Massachusetts, "nearly every sector in the state is experiencing labor shortages. But in these mainly nonprofit human services jobs, the effects are far-reaching. Workers dealing with COVID-induced stress are pulling double shifts to make up for staffing shortages. And with so many jobs going unfilled, vulnerable populations aren't always able to get the vital services they need."¹ We're seeing the same trends in Oregon, as we know that "the number of family child care homes has decreased nationally, and recent studies describe the reasons these homes close. However, the reasons for the falling numbers are not the same in all communities. Community factors, such as demographics and economic conditions, affect the supply of child care."² The National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance report breaks down "4 major factors for why family child care providers are leaving the field: compensation and benefits, business operations, demographic factors, and new requirements and regulations."³ "Providers may leave the workforce to seek higher pay or benefits because being a provider can have low or unpredictable income and no benefits. For business operations, providers left family child care due to family child care providers' lack of business expertise; rising costs; local challenges like zoning restrictions or high fees for licensing, technology challenges; declining enrollment, increased competition, and availability of other options for families. For demographic factors, providers left the family child care workforce because of the demands of the job including long hours, physical requirements, and work/family balance; providers retiring and not being replaced; and lack of respect. Providers also left family child care due to new or increased requirements and regulations, which include difficulties navigating multiple and changing requirements like background checks; quality improvement systems and to access public funding/subsidy reimbursements providers had to participate in these systems; and access advancement opportunities like state quality improvement initiatives."⁴ Nationally, the child care workforce has suffered, and many states including Oregon have had issues with child care supply.

Creating worker incentives is vitally important to the recruitment and retention of child care providers in the state but to also ensuring that that workforce is also culturally diverse. Culture-specific child care providers are essential to the community, as they provide representation in a space that is heavily relational and can provide care that has cultural traditions and values naturally built in. The Black community is often culturally misunderstood, and their needs are

¹ Boston Globe, Human Services Agencies Face Staffing Crisis Delaying Services for those in Need, 2021.

² National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance, Addressing the Decreasing Number of Family Child Care Providers in the United States, 2020, pg. 8.

³ National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance, Addressing the Decreasing Number of Family Child Care Providers in the United States, 2020, pg. 8-10.

⁴ National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance, Addressing the Decreasing Number of Family Child Care Providers in the United States, 2020, pg. 8-10.



overlooked. In the “State of Black Oregon” report by the Urban League of Portland, it is stated that “Black women find good business opportunities being child care providers and with them in the workforce, child care is more culturally responsive to the needs of Black children.”⁵ We know that having people that look like us, providing services and care to us, can give us ease of mind. With Oregon being a child care desert, there is a concern about how many providers of color are in the child care workforce.

With HB 3029, we can expand the child care workforce and support people of color that want to become providers but due to barriers are unable to. HB 3029 directs the Department of Early Learning and Care to establish and implement a child care provider incentive program to assist child care providers who want to provide child care in Oregon. Under the Child Care Provider Incentive Fund, providers can qualify for multiple incentives and incentives that are for multiyear periods. The types of incentives that may be provided include loan repayment subsidies; stipends; scholarships for students in early childhood professional development; child care assistance, and housing assistance. These incentives are crucial to supporting the child care workforce and creating employment opportunities for people of color, which ultimately supports Oregon families and the economy. If we do nothing, the available workforce will continue to shrink, child care deserts will persist, and working families will struggle to find affordable care for their children, leaving them to make difficult financial decisions.

Please pass HB 3029 to make the child care provider profession accessible and increase the child care provider inventory that Oregon desperately needs. Respectfully,

Stephanie Phillips Bridges
Policy Analyst
Urban League of Portland
Portland, OR 97227
Phone: 503.740.2607
Fax: 503.281.2612

⁵ Urban League of Portland, State of Black Oregon, 2015, pg. 116.