



February 20, 2023

TO: House Committee on Early Childhood & Human Services
FROM: The Children's Agenda
RE: Support for HB 2504, HB 2991, and HB 3029

Dear Chair Reynolds, Vice Chairs Nguyen and Scharf, and Members of the Committee,

The Children's Agenda, convened by Our Children Oregon, brings together ~127 organizations statewide to create a holistic legislative agenda dedicated to advancing whole-child advocacy and improving the well-being of Oregon's children, youth, and families. Our collective created a 2023 legislative agenda that focuses on community-driven solutions to provide access and opportunities for all children and families. **This year, investing in early childhood and child care is a top priority of the 2023 Children's Agenda.**

Oregon has been dedicated to taking the necessary steps and crucial investments for child care providers across the state. However, there are significant barriers to entering and navigating the early child care workforce for both new and existing workers, especially for providers who our systems have excluded. This includes women, providers of color, providers who speak languages other than English, and providers in remote, rural communities. All of whom represent the very people who are most needed to support our youngest Oregonians.

Although operating grants helped many child care businesses survive the height of the pandemic, Oregon has sustained a loss of about 20% of the pre-pandemic childcare slots. This has drastically increased the number of children and families who lack vital access to quality care. A 2021 statewide survey of over 200 providers indicated that financial support is still their most urgent need. The report estimates:

- The number of programs that serve 100+ children has decreased by 64%.¹
- 33% have not been able to rehire staff who were laid off or furloughed.²
- Of the 40% of programs that are still open, they are only operating at 76% capacity compared to pre-COVID numbers.³

It's time for Oregon to invest in the workforce that makes our economic well-being possible. Parents deserve the peace of mind of knowing that their little ones have a safe, affordable, place of care. Essential, skilled providers deserve the support and resources they need to provide that care, along with increased compensation and equitable supports. This public investment in our childcare workforce will not only benefit working parents and the child care providers who have been struggling to stay financially afloat, but it will also ultimately benefit all Oregonians. The stability of our economy and the well-being of Oregon children heavily depend on our efforts to invest in the child care workforce and the lifelong value of quality child care— not

¹ <https://childcarefororegon.org/survey>

² <https://childcarefororegon.org/survey>

³ <https://childcarefororegon.org/survey>

just for our children now, but for our shared future.

The Children’s Agenda strongly supports HB 2504, HB 2991, and HB 3029:

- *Remove Barriers to Entry into the Early Childhood Workforce (HB 2504):* Support the development of a culturally responsive child care workforce by addressing barriers impeding entry into this workforce by international early childhood professionals.
- *Enhancing Access to Jobs in the Early Childhood Workforce (HB 2991):* Remove unnecessary barriers to professional credentials through our state’s Online Registry System (ORO) by addressing issues such as an onerous credentialing process and lack of linguistically diverse access.
- *Child Care Provider Incentive Program (HB 3029):* Create an incentive and assistance program for child care workforce that is focused on providing financial support through covering education or licensing costs, to providing housing support to increase recruitment and retention among the child care workforce.

Healthy development in children requires dependable, effective, and consistent interactions between caring adults. Continuous struggles of finding child care as a parent, retaining qualified staff as a provider, and navigating career pathways as a workforce member threatens the well-being of our children and requires continued and robust investments by the state. HB 2504, HB 2991, and HB 3029 will provide the essential next steps toward establishing a strong child care sector.

We thank you for your time and your efforts to take these necessary steps to improve our child care system. We urge your support for HB 2504, HB 2991, and HB 3029.

Sincerely,

Our Children Oregon
Children’s Institute
APANO
Decoding Dyslexia Oregon
Catholic Community Services
Clackamas Women’s Services
Coalition of Communities of Color
Community Action Team, Inc.
FACT Oregon
Families First Parent Resource Center
Family Forward Oregon
Fight Crime: Invest in Kids
Friends of Outdoor School
IRCO
Neighborhood Partnership
Oregon Alliance of YMCAs
Oregon AG’s Sexual Assault Task Force

Oregon Association of Relief Nurseries
Oregon AEYC
Oregon CASA Network
Oregon Center for Public Policy
Oregon Coalition of Local Health Officials
Oregon Food Bank
Oregon Kids Read
Oregon PTA
Oregon Primary Care Association
Oregon Resource Family Alliance
Oregon School-Based Health Alliance
Prevent Child Abuse Oregon
Pro-Choice Oregon
Reach Out and Read Northwest
ReadyNation
SEIU 503
Southern Oregon Success
Washington County Kids