

COURTNEY NERON  
STATE REPRESENTATIVE  
DISTRICT 26



## HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

### Testimony in Support of HB 3029

February 15, 2023

Chair Reynolds, Vice-Chair Nguyen, Vice Chair Scharf, and members of the House Committee on Early Childhood and Human Services,

For the record, I am Courtney Neron, State Representative for House District 26. I am here in support of the work being done by the Childcare For Oregon Coalition, and in this testimony, I will focus on [HB 3029](#) which directs the Department of Early Learning and Care (DELIC) to establish and implement a child care provider incentive program.

In my conversations with the Director Chatterjee of DELIC, I am reassured to hear about the Early Learning Account resources currently being allocated for professional learning that are also building toward the workforce goals shared in HB3029. Alignment is critical and investments in our goals will help us achieve them. Scholarships for early educators and education awards, such as those offered by the Oregon Center for Career Development at PSU, are critical for ongoing sector support and long term success for Oregon childcare. I am grateful that Director Chatterjee is committed to emphasizing that early learning and child care is a public good like K-12 education.

Covid-19 has certainly highlighted the acute and immediate needs of children, parents, and providers. **It is incumbent upon this legislature to continue to build on the work we have done in recent sessions, to keep investing in the child care sector, and to maintain momentum for long term investments and policies that attract and retain a stable childcare workforce.**

As we invest in the future of our workforce, whether in construction or chip manufacturing or renewable energy, we must prioritize child care providers. This predominantly women-led workforce is critical to our economic infrastructure and investments in this workforce support underserved community members who are disproportionately impacted when there is a lack of investment in child care. We must make investments and policies to meet the **long-term stabilization** needs of this sector. Parallel to this, we need to address our **immediate** needs by increasing recruitment and retention among our child care workforce.

Child care providers and early childhood educators are education professionals, yet average annual wages in child care are about half the all-industry Oregon average. Until we recognize the immense value they provide for our communities, they will continue to see poverty wages and insufficient benefits. On top of that, families will continue to lack access to quality, affordable child care. HB 3029 begins to recognize child care providers for the expertise and passion they bring to the field to best serve our children and help parents go to work every day.

To be clear, HB 3029 should not be passed in lieu of addressing low-compensation and lack of benefits in the child care industry systematically. Over the past two years, this body has taken important steps to raise provider subsidy rates and move our state toward a funding model based on the true cost of providing quality care. However, we still have many years and much work ahead of us to solve this crisis and HB 3029 should be one part of a multifaceted approach.

**HB 3029 provides financial support and housing incentives through loan repayment subsidies, stipends, scholarships, and child care and housing assistance to build up our child care workforce.** This bill is part of a comprehensive child care package for Oregon. We need to invest in a range of multi-year strategies to build what Oregon families and our child care sector really need. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. **I urge your support of HB 3029.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Courtney Neron". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rep Courtney Neron

House District 26

Wilsonville, including the Charbonneau district, King City, Sherwood,  
Tigard/Bull Mountain, and Parrett Mountain