



To: House Committee on Early Childhood and Human Services  
From: Imagine Black Futures  
Re: Support for HB 2504; HB 2991; HB 3029  
Date: February 20, 2023

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bills 2504, 2991, and 3029. My name is Danita Harris; I am the Deputy Director of Movement Building at Imagine Black Futures, a community-driven organization envisioning a world where people of African descent enjoy the rights, resources, and recognition to be a thriving, resilient, and connected community.

We are writing to support these bills because we know that access to childcare is necessary for joyful children, thriving families, and a strong economy. The pandemic has made clear that no other work can happen without care work. Child care provides the necessary infrastructure for Oregon's essential workforce to work. We continue to see the impact on employment when parents cannot find child care, especially for mothers.

Despite how prohibitively expensive child care is for parents, child care providers (disproportionately Black, Indigenous, and women of color) are among the lowest-paid workers in Oregon. In 2018, the median wage of preschool teachers, many of whom are college-educated, was \$13.95 an hour and was \$11.86 for childcare workers in Oregon.

This financial reality is deeply felt within the Black community; more than six in ten (62.2 percent) Black women are in the workforce, making us one of the two racial/ethnic groups with the highest labor force participation rate among women and the only group with a higher labor force participation rate than their male counterparts. We must support Black women and mothers; they have always been the engine behind our economy.

Child care is primarily funded by families that cannot afford the actual costs associated with care for children. While parents cannot afford care, childcare providers are not charging enough to cover the costs of providing 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 childcare desert for at least one age group of children.



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- HB 2504 will support the development of a cultural response child care workforce by addressing barriers impeding entry into this workforce by international early childhood professionals.
- HB 2991 will remove unnecessary barriers to professional credentials through our state's Online Registry System (ORO) by addressing issues such as an overly burdensome credentialing process and a lack of linguistically-diverse access.
- HB 3029 will create an incentive and assistance program for child care workforce that is focused on providing financial support through covering education or licensing costs to provide housing support to increase recruitment and retention among the childcare workforce.

Every Oregon family deserves access to high-quality, affordable, culturally relevant child care, and *every worker deserves a liveable wage*. Still, to do so, we must create accessible, equitable workforce pathways, increase compensation, and stabilize the childcare field. House Bills 2504, 2991, and 3029 help us get closer to achieving this goal. Imagine Black Futures strongly encourages your support for these bills.

Thank you,  
Danita Harris, Deputy Director of Movement Building  
Imagine Black Futures