



Oregon moms and caregivers fighting for gender, economic, and racial justice.

To: House Committee on Early Childhood & Human Services
From: Courtney Veronneau, Family Forward Oregon
Date: February 20, 2023
RE: In Support of House Bills 2504, 2991, and 3029

Chair Reynolds, Vice-Chairs Nguyen and Sharf, members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments in support for House Bills 2504, 2991, and 3029. Family Forward Oregon works with mamas and caregivers across the state to pass policies that better support care and caregiving, like universal child care. We know that care is the work that makes all other work possible, and strongly support this package of bills that will help support and grow our critical child care workforce.

While our state has taken necessary steps and made critical investments to address the child care crisis in the last two years, without continued attention and investment in child care-- supply-building, facilities, workforce investments, affordability, access - this crisis will continue to have a profound economic impact on those who are already financially vulnerable: the disproportionately Black, Indigenous, and women of color who make up the child care workforce, and low-income and families of color who struggle to access the quality care they need.

As a member of the Child Care for Oregon¹ coalition, we have developed a set of legislative priorities for 2023 to build on current legislative commitments to improving Oregon's child care system and continue to invest in and build the child care system that Oregonians want and deserve. Our full agenda is focused on three areas: improving affordability and access, investing in child care infrastructure, and supporting and building the child care workforce. The three bills being heard today hone in on the last focus area, the workforce.

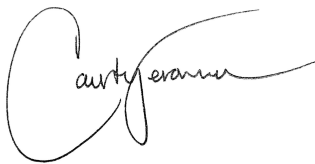
HB 2504 will support the development of a cultural response child care workforce by addressing barriers impeding entry into the early childhood workforce by international early childhood professionals. HB 3029 creates a new program that would provide financial support through covering education or licensing costs, to providing housing and other basic living support to increase recruitment and retention among the child care workforce. These are bills that we can move forward to immediately address known barriers and provide much needed support to child care and early learning professionals.

¹ <https://childcarefororegon.org/>

HB 2991 provides us with an opportunity to gather stakeholder experiences and expertise to develop recommendations that will aid us in building a child care career pathway system that will better serve this workforce and state in the long run. Through the stakeholder process outlined in the bill and a forthcoming amendment, HB 2991 will aim to address unnecessary barriers in our state's professional credentialing system and lack of linguistically-diverse access by providing recommendations to both administrative rules and statutes. This is a bill that we can be moving forward to help us begin tackling systemic issues and inequities in our child care workforce pathway systems and provide longer term direction to build the child care workforce our Oregon needs.

Many are focused on economic development in this legislative session. No workforce development strategy passed by the Legislature this year can be successful without addressing Oregon's child care shortage. Like roads and bridges, child care is necessary infrastructure that allows people to go to work. Without building and investing in the workforce that provides this critical care, Oregon's child care supply issues cannot be fully addressed.

Every Oregon family deserves access to high quality, affordable, and culturally relevant child care, but in order to do so, we must create accessible, equitable workforce pathways, increase compensation, and stabilize the child care field. House Bills 2504, 2991, and 3029 help us reach this goal and I strongly urge your support for these bills.



Courtney Veronneau
Senior Political Director
Family Forward Oregon

