

Submitter: Michelle Lasley

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Education

Measure: HB5013

Dear Co-Chairs Frederick and McLain and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 5013. My name is Michelle Lasley, I live in Portland and I am a parent of a 16 year old.

I didn't plan to become pregnant. I wished I had planned my pregnancy - just so we could have figured out child care. I assumed there would be child care on every corner, and I was wrong. I was finishing school at Portland State, so nearing the end of my pregnancy, I called the on-campus child care and was told I should have been on a waitlist 2 years ago. (I hadn't even met my now-husband!) That meant, working, going to school, and providing care for my baby, while my body was sick. I have an autoimmune disease that robbed my breast milk of necessary protein for my son, so he went from the 93% in weight to the 3%. He went from a chubby, healthy baby, to a skinny, fragile baby.

There are so many intersections of lack of care - inadequate medical coverage, inadequate resources to help me through the system, and most especially inadequate availability to child care. Even though he had state insurance, we used food stamps, and I was on WIC— I had no idea if I even qualified for child care. Which meant we had to deal with it all on our own. So, while we managed, my career never got started, my ability to earn never got started, my ability to contribute fully to my family never got started.

Eventually, I did find work. The first thing that I could get that would work with our schedule needs, paid \$12/hour. Thankfully, there were spots for my now toddler, but I paid \$9/hour for him to attend that child care center. After taxes, what was I left with? Even when I got a slightly better job and we switched my son's care, the realization hit - I was paying for the privilege of going to work. And, with my years of experience and college degree, I could still only find slightly above entry level work that would fit in the hours I could work - the hours I could afford to work to balance child care.

This was between 2007 and 2010. This was more than 10 years before our global pandemic. We owe our mothers better. We owe our families better. We owe our kids better than this. Please heavily invest in child care this session to protect and expand current investments in our child care programs so we can give mothers and our kids the support they need to begin thriving.

Sincerely,

Michelle Lasley