

April 8, 2023

To: Joint Committee on Ways & Means
From: Laura Labarre, Portland, OR
Re: Child Care Funding

Co-Chairs Senator Steiner and Rep Sanchez, Members of the Committee:

My name is Laura Labarre, and I am a parent of two children under age 5 living in Portland, OR.

I'm sure you share a hope I have that someday my kids and their peers will be able to look back on their childhoods and say wow, Oregon was the best place to be a kid. As Oregon's long standing childcare crisis reaches a fever pitch in the wake of COVID, I fear we are miles from a reality like that. I'm writing to urge you to prioritize funding and action to support a robust, equitable, and accessible childcare infrastructure in which children, families, and educators can thrive. Caregivers, children, and providers are in a state of emergency and this crisis erodes the wealth, health, and future of our state every day it continues. Right now specifically, you can vote YES and speak to your colleagues about supporting the following legislation:

- HB 3005- Creates a child care and early learning facilities fund
- HB 3027- Funds trusted CBOs to provide navigation services to families who should be eligible for child care assistance
- HB 2727: Creates a workgroup and report on local & state zoning barriers to siting child care facilities

These bills would make an enormous difference for my family and my community. My family actually has a relative amount of privilege. I have a partner and we both are employed with college educations--I worked in early childhood policy and programming for four years, and even for us child care has been a nightmare. Despite signing my firstborn up for five waitlists when I was but six months pregnant, I did not secure full-time childcare by the time I was forced to return to work at the risk of losing my job at eight weeks postpartum. Combined with medical debt from a complicated birth, paying for the scant child care we had was difficult given my reduced hours at work. Meanwhile my son would bond with amazing and talented teachers who were forced out of the field because of unlivable wages. It was hard for him to lose so many attachment figures over and over so early, and I can only imagine the anguish it caused the providers and educators themselves. To this day I still cannot find full-time care for my two children in an environment that meets their needs, as one of my children is neurodivergent. We cobble together help from family, babysitters, nanny services, and friends, which is stressful, expensive, and erratic and even forced me entirely out of the workforce for two months in spring 2022.

My story is one of a family with a fairly high number of resources and advantages. In some ways, we are among the lucky ones, so it is worth considering what that means for those with less privilege like single parents, parents affected by poverty, families facing racial discrimination, and more. Last May, it was [reported](#) that the cost of one infant in daycare in Oregon now exceeds the cost of college tuition, assuming a family can even find a full-time slot. This is a reality my family experienced first-hand, and it was harmful. It was harmful to us as parents, to the beloved teachers whose pay somehow did not match the exorbitant cost, but

most of all to my children who have been shuffled around without a dependable routine, losing connections with teachers and shepherded through their early childhoods by stressed out parents. Certainly we do our best to compensate and shield them from the stress, but it is clear that we're not yet in a situation where my children can look back and say Oregon was the best place to be a kid. Prioritizing child care, including through the actions recommended on the legislation above, will get us that much closer. Thank you for your consideration and time.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Labarre