

Submitter: Kaitlin Gaffney  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means  
Measure: SB5506

April 8, 2023

To: Joint Committee on Ways & Means  
From: Kaitlin Gaffney, Portland 97213  
Re: Child Care Funding

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

My name is Kaitlin Gaffney and I live in NE Portland with my wife and our two children. I am here today to urge you to prioritize funding for child care in our state budget this year. Our child care system is broken and the pandemic has only made the crisis worse.

When I was pregnant with our first child, I was shocked to learn how expensive quality care was. Full time care for one newborn was nearly equal to our mortgage payment. Neither my wife or I made enough money to sustain our family on one income but we made too much to qualify for assistance. Child care was a huge financial burden on top of student loans and other bills but we made it work.

Our dream had always been to have a second child, but the high cost of child care made us wonder if we should change our plans. I had a government job with benefits and my wife was a small business owner but paying nearly double our mortgage for child care seemed impossible. Even if we could have afforded to lose my income, our family relied on my job for health insurance. It was devastating that the choice to grow our family was tied to a lack of access to affordable, quality childcare.

We did choose to have a second child but those first few years, when we had two children in full time childcare were very difficult. We took on tremendous debt just trying to survive and nearly ended up filing for bankruptcy.

So many families and particularly women are forced to make these impossible choices for how to grow and care for their families, especially since the pandemic has further devastated the child care industry. In 2021, two times more women than men left the workforce and the number one reason women changed or left jobs last year was a lack of child care.

Unless we take action as a state, this crisis will continue to have a devastating

economic impact on women and families. Particularly Black, Indigenous, and women of color who disproportionately make up the child care workforce, and low-income and families of color who struggle to access the quality care they need.

I urge you to recognize how essential child care is to the health of our families and our economy. Our state cannot afford to wait to invest in child care.

Thank you,  
Kaitlin Gaffney