

Date: April 28, 2023

To: House Committee on Early Childhood and Human Services

From: Stephanie Phillips Bridges, Senior Policy Analyst for the Urban League of Portland

Re: Support for Invest in Early Childhood and Child Care: Protect Child Care Providers in Rentals, SB 599

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

My name is Stephanie Phillips Bridges, and I am a Senior Policy Analyst with the Urban League of Portland and I respectfully submit this testimony in support of Senate Bill 599. The Urban League of Portland is one of Oregon's oldest civil rights and social service organizations, empowering African Americans, and others to achieve equality in education, employment, health, economic security, and quality of life across Oregon and SW Washington.

The Oregon Early Learning Division published the "Oregon's Child Care Desert 2020: Mapping Supply by Age Group and Percentage of Publicly Funded Slots" report which states "all Oregon counties are child care deserts for infants and toddlers and 25 of the 36 (69%) counties are deserts for preschool-age children. Additionally, for infants and toddlers over half of Oregon's counties are extreme deserts, where there is, at most, one slot for every 10 children. Per the report, a child care desert is defined as a community with more than 3 children for every regulated child care slot, meaning there are more children needing care than there are spots unavailable."¹ Essentially, that community does not have child care that can be accessed when needed. The Oregon Early Learning Division report also shares that "recent research revealed clear disparities in how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted child care for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) families in Oregon."² Before the COVID-19 pandemic, child care needs were not being met, especially for Black families. Oregon families must choose between work and taking care of their child/ren due to child care accessibility. Families may struggle with poverty if they cannot meet their living expenses and child care needs.

Access to affordable child care is a poverty reduction tool that leads to benefits for our community and economy. The "State of Black Oregon" report published in 2015 by the Urban League of Portland, shared "a study by David Domeij "Should Day Care be Subsidized" showed that government-subsidized child care increases the labor rate among young women. Their added tax contributions to the economy more than cover the cost of the subsidies. And child care subsidies can also reduce the number of women and families needing public assistance. Oregon's own experience in helping families return to the workforce through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) confirmed that Employment Related Day Care (ERDC) helped people stay employed and off state and federal benefits and build wealth, and provided a lift out of poverty. Child care subsidies can also offer Black women good business opportunities (as providers) with the added benefit of making child care more culturally responsive to the needs of Black children. The skills developed as a child care provider can lead some Black women to consider working in the healthcare field as a homecare or personal support worker, earning a living wage with good benefits. It is clear that child care subsidies are not only beneficial to families in need of affordable child care, but to a potential growth industry of child care workers, in equal measure. Expertise in child care may also lead to working as a community health worker or personal health navigator. Training community members for such jobs ensures linguistically and culturally appropriate services to the

¹ Oregon Early Learning Division, Oregon's Child Care Desert 2020: Mapping Supply by Age Group and Percentage of Publicly Funded Slots, 2021.

² Oregon Early Learning Division, Oregon's Child Care Desert 2020: Mapping Supply by Age Group and Percentage of Publicly Funded Slots, 2021.

community while offering Black women an opportunity to advance their careers. Child care access provides an opportunity to overcome poverty, which helps our families and economy.”³

Our entire economy is dependent on equitable access to child care. Like roads and bridges, affordable, high-quality child care is a necessary infrastructure. Parents need affordable and accessible child care that provides peace of mind that their children are learning and loved. Employers need their employees to have access to reliable, affordable child care so they can return to work. This means more providers are needed in child care centers and/or in homes. “The Child Care for Oregon Coalition conducted a survey in August 2021 to better understand how their programs have been impacted by COVID-19 and what more they might need to reopen, stabilize, or grow their programs. They received 201 survey responses from providers, and 5% of their responses were from Black providers. The survey responses revealed 40% of providers were certified family child care home providers, who either pay a mortgage or rent. The results found the primary barrier providers face is policy, which includes rules and regulations, the Early Learning Division, and policy that does not support equity including funding.”⁴ We know Oregon does not have enough providers and policies are a barrier for existing providers. This makes us question how many more people would become providers if they did not face barriers like renting, funding, policies, and landlord support/cooperation.

With SB 599, landlords will be required to allow dwellings to be used as a family child care home, subject to conditions. Child care is a workforce where children can be cared for in homes and home types can vary. Our future workforce demands must ensure that all children have access to child care environments that stimulate development and get kids ready to learn in K-12. Additionally, SB 599 will authorize the Early Learning Council to establish rules for landlords; puts protections in place for the landlord from liability, which can provide landlords with a piece of mind, and they may be more supportive of child care being offered in their home. As well as regulations in place for the landlord and child care provider for child care services to be offered in the home, landlords and child care providers can work cohesively under SB 599 to support the child care provider's employment, which would lead to more people being able to become child care home providers who support Oregon families and Oregon overall.

Please pass SB 599 to make the child care home provider profession accessible and increase the child care provider inventory that Oregon desperately needs. Our families, children, and economy are depending on your support, especially Black families who experience disparities when looking for child care.

Respectfully,



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³ Urban League of Portland, State of Black Oregon, 2015.

⁴ Child Care for Oregon, Impact of COVID-19 Oregon Child Care Provider Survey 2021, 2021.