

Submitter: Assistant Sylla Traore
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure: SB5506

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

My name is Assitan Sylla Traore, I am originally from Mali, West Africa and I am the current director at the Little French School in Eugene, Oregon.

I am writing to urge you to prioritize funding for childcare in the state budget because the child care crisis that existed before the COVID-19 pandemic is still a state of emergency for parents, providers, and kids across Oregon.

When I first moved to America 10 years ago, I was shocked by two things: The high cost of education and Healthcare. Coming from a less developed country, I had no idea and did not understand why American students needed to take out huge loans to go to college in a country that is so wealthy and why not all Americans have free and equal access to healthcare.

As I was finishing up my Masters degree, and as time passed by, I started to understand a lot of things but still think it is sad that it is that way.

At this time, the future of childcare is at stake and if nothing is done to provide more funding to make quality childcare affordable and accessible, because everyone will be affected, parents of young children, companies and the community as a whole.

Subsidizing the childcare industry and providing more funding will allow us to pay living wages to the wonderful teachers and staff that come to work every day to nurture, support and teach our children. The pay rate in childcare is ridiculously low. I have been the director of a nonprofit certified child care center for seven years now. We have been providing high quality care to children in the community through the medium of French language for 36 years. During my seven years running the school, each time I do payroll, I have tears in my eyes because of the low wages paid to our wonderful teachers. Not because we do not want to pay them but because we cannot afford it. More funding will allow us to pay living wages for childcare staff.

Additionally, tuition alone does not cover the cost of running our school. We have to work very hard to fundraise and make up for the deficit as we kept our tuition low to make it affordable for our families which put our budget in deficit. This year only, we have been running our school with about \$7,000 to \$8,000 monthly deficit. If we do not get funding next year, our program that has been here for 36 years will risk closing.

Beside low wages for the staff, the second issue we face which affect parents is the affordability and accessibility of childcare. There are not enough childcare centers for the families that need care. IParents put their unborn kids on waitlists so that they are guaranteed to get a sport when the child is born.

I am writing to urge you to prioritize funding for childcare in the state budget because the child care crisis that existed before the COVID-19 pandemic is still a state of emergency for parents, providers, and kids across Oregon.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Assitan Sylla Traore (Assa)