



## Oregon moms and caregivers fighting for gender, economic, and racial justice.

To: Joint Committee on Ways & Means  
From: Candice R. Vickers, MEd, MSSE  
Date: March 22, 2025  
RE: Investing in our child care system

Co-Chair Tawna D. Sanchez, Co-Chair Kate Lieber and members of the Committee,

My name is Candice Vickers, I'm a mother of two, a fourth generation Portland resident and the Executive Director of Family Forward Oregon.

I'm here today to ask you to fulfill your commitment to Oregon families and invest in child care like the essential infrastructure it is. Just like roads and bridges, public schools and community colleges, affordable, quality child care is necessary community infrastructure.

Right now, child care is in crisis, and I urge lawmakers to support Oregon's Employment Related Day Care (ERDC) child care subsidy program. The ERDC program's success impacts the entire child care ecosystem as the largest single buyer of child care in Oregon. Without investment, we risk the progress that has been made in expanding the child care workforce — which makes care more expensive for ALL families, including private-payers.

Over 10,000 families are on a waitlist for ERDC, due to the Legislature's historic underfunding of this program. An investment of \$250M in the Employment Related Day Care program is necessary. It would allow Oregon to continue to serve the families currently enrolled in ERDC, but it would only begin to reduce the waitlist for these critical subsidies.

Secondly, over 4,000 families cannot find a provider to use the Employee Related Day Care (ERDC) subsidy. When families can't find care, it impacts child care businesses that face low enrollment and financial instability, risking closure. I urge you to strengthen our vital, statewide Child Care Referral Agencies through House Bill 2452 so that Employment Related Day Care providers can connect with eligible families — which is especially needed in rural regions.

Admittedly, the investment we ask for today will only maintain the status-quo—and that is not what we believe is truly needed at this moment.

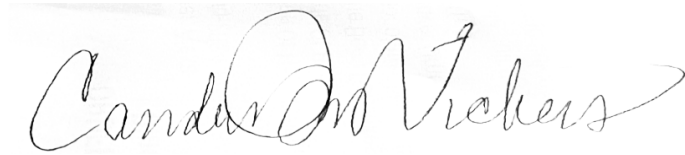
In this moment, the uncertainty we are facing as a nation calls for more. Oregonians need bold action to protect and strengthen our state—including for essential services like child care.

Child care is in crisis — and that means our economy is in crisis. Caregivers and parents can participate in the labor market and provide for their families and loved ones, while it drives local economies.

Legislators have a commitment to fulfill: Child care must be invested in for Oregon to thrive. When we invest in child care, we all benefit.

I urge Oregon Legislators to invest in child care, and invest in Oregon's economy and Oregon's future NOW!

In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Candice R. Vickers". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop for the letter 'C' and a long, sweeping tail for the 's'.

Candice R. Vickers, MEd, MSSE  
Executive Director  
Family Forward Oregon

