

To: Ways and Means Committee

From: Atanasio Gaona

Date: 4/7/2025

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

My name is Rabecca Whalen and I am a child care provider and community member from Roseburg Oregon.

I'm writing to urge lawmakers to invest an additional \$500 million for the Employment Related Day Care Program in SB 5514, the Department of Early Learning and Care agency budget. Investing an additional \$500 million dollars in ERDC is crucial to stabilizing the entire child care ecosystem and is essential to addressing long-standing issues plaguing our child care system. By doing so, we can ensure that all families, regardless of income level, have access to affordable and high-quality child care options that meet our unique needs. This investment will have a ripple effect throughout our economy, supporting small businesses, creating jobs, and stimulating local economic growth.

As a certified home childcare in a lower income area, most of our families depend upon ERDC to cover the majority of their childcare costs. As these children grow and go off to grade school, the families that normally transition into care cannot due to lack of funding. We are seeing more and more parents forced to stay home with their children rather than continuing to be productive members of society, all because they cannot overcome the hurdle of childcare costs. This is affecting childcare programs as well, creating lower enrollments which force providers to cut staff, expenses that create higher quality programs, and extra curricular activities. We are truly worried that once the "covid babies" mature and graduate to elementary school, we will not have the ability to continue to provide the high quality care our families depend upon. Many programs in our area will be forced to shutter their businesses, and we desperately hope we are not one of them. Please provide access to quality programs through ERDC to younger families who deserve the same opportunities and care that have been available up to this point for existing families. Give the young families in our area the opportunity to work their way out of poverty!

I urge you to allocate an additional \$500 million dollars for the ERDC program in the Department of Early Learning and Care budget.

Thank you,

Rabecca Whalen

Roseburg Oregon