



VOICES UNITED.
OPPORTUNITY REIMAGINED.

April 27, 2021

House Committee on Rules
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support for HB 3073A and the -A4 amendment

Chair Smith Warner, Vice Chair Drazan, Vice Chair Holvey and Members of the Committee,

Our Children Oregon's (OCO) mission is to be a voice and force for the common good for all Oregon children, ensuring all children have the resources and opportunities they need to reach their full potential. OCO is the result of the merger between two historic Oregon non-profits: The Children's Trust Fund of Oregon and Children First for Oregon. We elevate data and lived experience to prioritize children and center communities. We continue to connect a community of 115 advocates, coalitions, and organizations through The Children's Agenda, a legislative agenda championing equitable state legislative policies and shared investments to improve the lives of Oregon's children and their families.

HB 3073 to improve both the overall governance of the child care system and the ERDC subsidy is part of the 2021 Children's Agenda and actively supported by many of our partners.

We knew that the child care system didn't work for most families before the pandemic, but the pandemic has revealed that the current system does not meet the needs of children, parents, and providers, and will not support Oregon's economic recovery.

Child care is primarily funded by families that cannot afford the true costs associated with care for children. While parents are unable to afford care, child care providers are not charging enough to cover the costs to provide care, often subsidizing the costs through their own low wages. The current funding structure is unsustainable and as a result, every county in Oregon was a child care desert for infants and toddlers before the pandemic.

Despite how expensive child care is for parents, child care providers (who are disproportionately Black, Indigenous, and women of color) are among the lowest-paid workers in Oregon. In 2018, the median wage of

The Children's Agenda

is a broad slate of equitable investments and policy solutions to meet the holistic needs of Oregon children, youth, and their families.



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preschool teachers, many of whom are college-educated, was \$13.95 an hour, and was \$11.86 for child care workers in Oregon. Average annual wages in child care are about half the all-industry Oregon average. This year has made even clearer how essential child care is—it is essential work that makes all other work possible—and yet, we don't compensate providers accordingly.

COVID-19 has laid bare the insufficiencies of our current child care system. It will take a long-term, sustained effort to rebuild a child care system that truly works for all our families. In the meantime, we can start with House Bill 3073, which will:

- Streamline child care governance with other child development programs serving many of the same families and providers, including Oregon PreKindergarten/Head Start, Preschool Promise, Baby Promise and others
- Making care more affordable for families by ensuring co-pays don't exceed 7%
- Expanding eligibility to children regardless of documentation status and for the multiple reasons parents are unavailable to provide care
- Ensuring children have access to more stable care with eligibility extending for a minimum of 12 months
- Making sure providers have more stable and adequate funding to provide developmentally appropriate, culturally responsive, and inclusive care.

Every Oregon family deserves and needs access to high quality, affordable, and culturally relevant child care, and every child care provider should be paid a wage that reflects the essential work they do. And it is time to restructure the governance of our child care system to better serve Oregon families. We can take the first steps to get there with House Bill 3073A with the -A4 amendments. Our Children Oregon urges your support for this important bill.

From the Our Children Oregon Team,

Chis Coughlin, Policy, Advocacy, and Engagement Director

Jenifer Wagley, Executive Director

View the 2021 Children's Agenda at www.ourchildrenoregon.org/2021-childrens-agenda