

To: The House Housing and Human Services Committee
From: Jessica Flook,
Re: Support of HB 2346, HB 2348, and HB 2024

Dear Chair Keny Guyer,

My name is Jessica Flook and I live in Portland.

I worked in the child care industry for almost ten years at a high-quality child care center. I faced challenges with every moment of working in child care, but my passion for reaching and teaching the most important people in our society have outweighed the challenges. Until now. What has made continuing as the center director too difficult to sustain, is that now I am also a first time mother to a beautiful and bright nine month old. My partner and I certainly wouldn't be able to afford putting him into care at the center where I work- even with the 50% decrease in tuition costs for employees- as my partner and my wages together simply wouldn't suffice. Unfortunately, We make too much for ERDC but not enough to be able to afford all of our basic needs. Therefore I am currently looking for employment outside of the childcare industry as my family is struggling to make ends meet and my little one is fast approaching the age where he should be in a care setting to learn that there are other small beings who need, just like him. This is all to say- the cost of quality childcare is too high and the pay for Early Childhood Educators and staff is too low.

If I could afford to bring my child to a high quality child care center, it would change the path our family life is currently taking. My partner and I could have a moment together to begin building the business we dream of, we could have more time together than simply passing along information about our child's day before heading out to our respective jobs and passing the duty of care to the other, and most importantly, my son could have the opportunity to learn with and from other people his age in an environment which was built with him in mind.

I thank you for taking the time to learn about my family and our story. I sincerely hope this helps to enact the change we need to see in our lives.

Sincerely,
Jessica Flook