

To: House Committee on Economic Development  
From: Kristi Collins  
Date: May 15, 2019  
Re: Child Care is Economic Infrastructure

Chair Lively, members of the committee:

My name is Kristi Collins with the Early Learning Hub of Linn, Benton & Lincoln Counties in the Family Resources and Education Center at Linn-Benton Community College. As one of the sixteen Early Learning Hubs in the state of Oregon, we are tasked with working towards three goals: that children arrive ready for Kindergarten; that they are raised in healthy, stable and attached families; and that the early learning system is aligned, coordinated and family centered.

Thank you for holding this hearing today to hear from local employers regarding the struggle their employees face finding child care. Today I'm not here representing an employer but as a regional convener of organizations that all focus on Oregon's Early Learning System.

Over the course of the past few month, the conversation regarding issues of access and affordability of child care has been elevated in my Hub region as a significant crisis employer's face when trying to hire and retain a quality workforce. This affects all businesses throughout my Hub region. I have heard from a large state university who has shared that high-level faculty position offers have been declined because the candidate was unable to find child care. I have also heard from multiple employers in manufacturing about how this is impacting their employees. As a result, we have partnered with a handful of large regional employers, our local Workforce Development Boards, and our Child Care Resource & Referral, and are planning a child care summit for interested employers in our region to explore innovative solutions to this complex issue.

While we recognize that it will take local and regional planning efforts to find solutions that meet each communities need, we also need the State to take leadership in elevating this crisis as a statewide issue concerning both child care access and affordability.

We hope today is the start of a deeper and longer-term conversation about the legislature's role in addressing this crisis.

Thank you.