

April 21st, 2021

To: The Joint Committee on Ways and Means
From: Neon Brooks,
Re: Childcare funding and HB 3073

Dear Co-Chairs Betsy Johnson, Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, and Dan Rayfield,

My name is Neon Brooks and I live in Portland with my husband, John, and my two little girls, Juni (5 years old) and Olive (21 months).

The last thirteen months have taught us a great deal about the importance of childcare. For my family, access to childcare allows me and my husband to do our jobs – to earn income and provide for our family. But it does so much more for our family than that. It provides Juni and Olive with a healthy, stimulating environment where they can grow socially and emotionally. It gives my husband and I the space to breathe, to maintain our mental health, and to be the parents that we want to be for our daughters. It provides all of us with stability and routine in a world where too much is unpredictable.

For the good of Oregon's children, parents, and broader society, every family should have access to high-quality, affordable childcare. Unfortunately, that is not our current reality. My family will pay nearly \$40,000 in childcare tuition this year, more than half the median family income of Oregonians. **It is critical that Oregon take steps immediately to make childcare affordable to all families, starting with those with the greatest need.** For this reason, I am urging the committee to pass HB 3703, which would expand eligibility for the ERDC program and make the program more accessible, practical, and functional for parents and providers.

At this time of crisis, Oregon mothers and caregivers have been carrying an enormous load, and this load has fallen primarily on low-income mothers and mothers of color. **It is a moral imperative that Oregon do right by these mothers and caregivers by updating the ERDC program to make it functional for families.**

Sincerely,

Neon Brooks