

April 22, 2021

To: Joint Committee on Ways & Means  
From: Danielle Cunningham  
Re: Child Care Funding and HB 3073

Tri-Chairs Johnson, Steiner-Hayward, and Rayfield and Members of the Committee:

My name is Danielle Cunningham and I live in Eugene, Oregon. I have spent the last eleven years in the field of Early Childhood Education. I have an Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education, Oregon Registry Director Credential, and Oregon Registry Community Trainer. I started my career eleven years ago as a lead teacher in a licensed child care center, from there I spent time as a license exempt provider working for a private pay family, after that I spent five years owning and operating a Licensed Certified Family Child Care program where I did serve families who qualified for the Oregon Department of Human Services Employment Related Day Care Subsidy Program. I am currently a Quality Improvement Specialist with Lane Counties Child Care Resource and Referral Agency where I work specifically with family child care providers.

I am writing this letter to address hardships families face when participating in the Employment Related Day Care Subsidy program. This state program has helped many working families afford child care but unfortunately many families are being left behind because of some fundamental processes that are not addressed in the current subsidy program. The fundamental processes include approval into the program while looking for work, skill building opportunities, and consistency with the quality child care payment system.

When applying for work an individual must be detailed, dedicated, consistent, and flexible which takes a lot of time and energy. With the current child care subsidy program, individuals do not have access to the program unless they are *already employed*. This makes it incredibly difficult for families to fill out applications, write essays, attend interviews, and attend company onboarding training without access to care. A new system set in place to support families while they look for employment would strengthen our local workforce while truly meeting the needs of our community.

A large barrier for individuals looking for work is having or acquiring the specific skills needed to begin applying for work. These skills include computer typing/navigation, resume building, essay writing, and test taking. Developing a program in which these individuals have access to one-on-one or small group training/scaffolding sessions with a support team will improve the family's financial outcome because the individual will have the skills necessary to apply for higher paying jobs. The current rules for ERDC do not allow parents to use their subsidy to participate in this crucial skill building work to improve their economic security long term.

Additionally, the current governance structure of the ERDC program and other early learning programs creates more complexity for parents and providers. Providers often receive subsidy payments from programs administered by both ODHS and the ELD. Having all programs located in one agency would provide "one door" access for services for parents and payment for providers.

Lastly, in the current Employment Related Day Care Subsidy program child care providers are paid based on the hourly attendance of the child. The problem with this model is that child care

facilities do not charge based on the hour, they charge based on the slot the family reserves for their child. This slot is based on a quarter time, part time, or full time set schedule the family works out with the child care program. Providers lose vital tuition when the pay scale is based on hourly attendance instead of monthly slots. By adapting a new monthly payment system, the family will be held to a set schedule of drop off and pick up of their child instead of the unpredictable current hourly system. A new ERDC payment system will also support our local child care providers by giving them a consistent monthly income making it easier to run their child care program.

By adding these fundamental processes to the existing Employment Related Day Care Subsidy Program, families will be set up for success instead of being behind before they start. By supporting our families, we strengthen our community and economy. I urge you to invest in childcare this legislative session, and fully-fund House Bill 3073.

Sincerely,

Danielle Cunningham