

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

I became a mother very early in life. I have an older son who lives with his father and two boys that are 3 and 4. While my husband and I have done everything to pay for our basic needs it has always been a struggle. I have had several setbacks that have made it difficult for me to get a good paying job. My brother was able to help with child care. We would work opposite shifts so that we only relied on him for a half a day of child care. Once I finally was able to get a job, the pandemic hit 6 months into my new job. Before the pandemic we lived near the dairy farm that my husband worked for as part of the benefits of working there. This was both a blessing and disadvantage as oftentimes he would be overworked and underpaid because he was so close to the dairy farm. After several years of putting up with the unfair working practices he began to complain and was punished. He was so stressed about the situation and unfair working practices he was forced to quit shortly after the pandemic started. At the same time because our housing was tied to a job he no longer had we were left houseless with no protections under the law even during a pandemic. We were houseless for a bit and then found a place that would rent to us without rental history. We moved 35 miles away and my brother was not able to move in with us so child care was not available or financially accessible. The fear of being exposed to a new unknown was too much to risk, I was laid off due to the pandemic shortly there after. Once I was asked to come back I could not because there was no accessible childcare for my two children.

My husband gets paid cash and this has made it difficult for us to apply for SNAP benefits let alone ERDC. If I were to go back to work that would most likely put us over the income level anyway and we would not be able to continue to qualify for the subsidized child care benefit. This is something that we have always struggled with. Just as we are starting to get on our feet and financially stable benefits get cut and we are back to where we were.

All parents, regardless of their employment status or income level, deserve good, quality options for early education and childcare. Parents should be able to afford childcare and should be able to choose the type of care and provider that is best suited for their children and their family.

I urge you to please fund childcare this legislative session and support HB 3073, because families like mine are all too common. We have been suffering before and during this pandemic. Our children deserve better and our communities will be better for it!

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