

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

I am the daughter of a labor working single mother who was unable to pay childcare facilities, which means while we were growing up, we moved from babysitter to babysitter. All children, regardless of their parents' employment type 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.

This is unfortunately not what I grew up with and I know from first hand experience how difficult and sometimes traumatizing the lack of care can be. Sometimes my mom couldn't afford one childcare provider so she'd find a new one until we eventually settled with one for a while. These encounters weren't always pleasant. I have a very vivid memory of an instance when we were being taken care of by a woman who had an abusive husband, and I witnessed the husband being abusive towards his own children. Being the older sister, I understood the gravity of the situation and I spoke to my mother about it. She later had to explain to my younger siblings what abuse was and what they had witnessed was not unacceptable. At the age of eight, my mother had no choice but to place me in charge and take care of my siblings in our home. This was not really a choice but a result of the high cost of child care and her low wages that drove us to such an extreme situation.

This situation led me to grow up a little faster. While other children enjoyed their childhood and school, I had an even bigger responsibility alongside childhood and school. Reflecting on this issue, I remember those times and how many children still perhaps have to live something similar, maybe even worse. I think about all labor working mothers who are trying to make ends meet and have little to no choice but to leave this responsibility of care upon the shoulders of their eldest child. We need to invest in childcare, we have to protect children. No child should have to endure the trauma and lack of care especially when as a society we value a child's development & safety. Please respond to the need for a better childcare system by fully funding childcare, like HB 3073 and help families and children have caring, safe and prosperous life experiences.

Sincerely,
Magy Viveros