

February 15th, 2021

To: The House Early Childhood Committee

From: Rebecca Ellis,

Re: Support of HB 2503 and HB 3073

Dear Chair Karin Power and Vice-Chairs Lisa Renyolds & Jack Zika,

My name is Rebecca Ellis and I live in Bend, Oregon. I am writing to share my personal experience with child care accessibility in Oregon, and previously, in Washington state, and how it has negatively impacted my family. When we moved to Bend in 2017, we relocated for my job. At the time, we had two school-aged children and one under two years of age. We thought my husband would initially stay home just until he found a job, but we soon realized that the cost of child care - both for our youngest and after-school care for our older two - would almost equal the amount of his paycheck at the time. We also soon learned just how high the cost of living in Bend really is, and it was necessary for us to make up that difference, somehow. I am grateful I have a flexible job and understanding employer, who has made it possible for my husband to work *some* hours, as we juggle kids back and forth. Even so, it has still made it difficult to keep up with the cost of living in Bend, as this restricts us on how many hours my husband can work. If we had access to less expensive childcare, it would have also made it possible for us to save up more each month, and thus be more prepared for unexpected life events like this past year, with the many negative effects of the pandemic.

In Washington state in 2014, my husband worked full-time and I stayed home with our children, who were all under 5, except my oldest. I decided to go back to school to finish my Associates Degree, as I found out I was eligible for financial aid. At the time, our family also received DHS assistance with health insurance & food stamps. However, it was very confusing to apply for child care assistance and while I thought we would be eligible, I learned after going through the application process that due to the fact I was not currently employed (even though I was enrolled as a full-time student at the college), I could not receive any child care assistance. It would have been a major hardship for our family if I had also taken on a part-time job, while attending college full-time, just to secure lower-cost child care. This made it virtually impossible to enter the program at the college that would have enabled me to pursue a better paying career, because I couldn't take the required on-campus classes due to lack of affordable childcare. The same struggles my family faces in Washington, I know families trying to access ERDC are facing in Oregon too.

Families need access to affordable quality child care so they can be financially secure and thrive. Please take these first steps to address our child care crisis in Oregon and pass House Bills 3073 and 2503.

Sincerely,  
Rebecca Ellis