

Testimony in Support of HB 2503 and 3073
Jessica Campbell, Rural Organizing Project
February 15, 2021

Chairperson Power, Vice Chairs Reynolds and Zika and Members of the Committee:

I am writing to provide testimony in support of House Bills 2503 and 3072. My name is Jessica Campbell and I am submitting testimony on behalf of the network of local organizations and groups in small town and rural Oregon coordinated by the Rural Organizing Project where I serve as the Executive Director. Our office is located in Cottage Grove and our network reaches into all of Oregon's counties.

The people in the communities we work with have expressed frustration over past years about the lack of accessible and affordable childcare that really meets the needs of kids and working parents. The past year of pandemic related changes has exacerbated the problem because, in many cases, children from pre-K through high school are home all day and expected to be doing school work online. Parents are extremely stressed, both financially and by the added strains on their time and energy. In many cases it's almost impossible for parents to continue working the same hours that they were before the pandemic without reliable childcare. This is especially true for single parent households and for people in low-wage employment.

We see a number of key problems that could be fixed with a comprehensive plan that makes more government investment so that childcare becomes a social benefit that our society needs:

1. Make childcare affordable by subsidizing costs for parents and capping the amount that they pay based on their salaries.
2. Make the process to apply for subsidies more streamlined and qualify families for a year so that childcare providers also have a more stable income stream.
3. Help create childcare resources in rural areas as well as urban ones and make their hours more flexible for parents who work shift work or long hours.
4. Support providers who represent the racial and ethnic diversity of the families in Oregon who need services.
5. Support better wages for workers in the childcare sector and provide training and support for those workers.

We recognize that these two bills will not fulfill all the childcare needs that exist in our communities but they are moving us in a positive direction. We urge you to support both.