



## Service Employees International Union Local 503

*72,000 public services workers, care providers, and non-profit employees in Oregon.*

**To: House Committee on Early Childhood**

**On: February 22, 2021**

**Re: House Bill 3073**

Chair Power, Vice-Chairs Reynolds and Zika, members of the committee,

My name is Courtney Graham, and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of SEIU Local 503. SEIU represents more than 72,000 public sector workers and care providers in Oregon, including regulated subsidy child care providers (Friend, Family, Neighbor or FFN providers) and certain staff who support the Employment Related Daycare (ERDC) program at the Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) and the Early Learning Division (ELD). Countless numbers of our members are also themselves parents, navigating Oregon's complicated child care system and attempting to keep their children safe and healthy during this pandemic while they continue to report to work. It is from these intersecting perspectives that we come to you today.

House Bill 3073 would make a number of changes to the way ERDC and child care are governed in our state. We realize conversations are ongoing on this bill, as well as House Bill 2503, and our written comments are merely intended to put our questions and suggestions for further consideration and discussion on the record as the Legislature deliberates significant child care governance changes.

The ERDC program is currently housed under Self Sufficiency (SSP) in ODHS. It's included as part of the ONE Integrated Eligibility system, as part of ODHS' work to ensure that there is "no wrong door" when Oregonians are seeking support services. Through ONE, someone could reach out to apply for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits and learn that they are eligible for other services as well, including ERDC, rather than submitting multiple separate applications for benefits. This system has just been implemented statewide, after years of development and significant cost to the state. Underlying the ONE system is not only incredibly complicated programming, but hundreds of staff who support Oregonians in applying for benefits, navigating the system, and assessing eligibility.

Under the current bill, it is not clear how transferring the responsibility for ERDC from ODHS to ELD could impact the ONE system or the ability of families to access benefits. If the program is moved in its entirety and carved out of ONE and ODHS altogether, it could prove completely counter to the stated goal of HB 3073, which is to streamline the governance of child care and early learning programs into one Agency/Authority. It is SEIU's position that the responsibility for determining eligibility for ERDC should remain within ODHS, in order to preserve the ONE system.

Other areas of potential concern for our members include ensuring that communication between Agency leaders and staff is open and transparent, particularly with regard to positions being considered for transfer; and prioritizing improving services for FFN providers rather than preserving the status quo.

A transformation such as this one, while presenting challenges such as those outlined above, is also an opportunity to rethink how we deliver services. Specifically, we hope that shifts are made in the way FFN providers are served by the state. A new Agency with a focus on child care could and should: improve communication with FFN providers, so that they receive information at the same time other provider types do; allocate more resources to training, developing policy for, and supporting FFN providers; improve the payment process and rate structure to make this type of child care sustainable for providers.

While we do have some concerns about how this shift in governance and program responsibility could impact the ERDC program, we are aware that there is a lot of work that needs to be done before formal shifts are made, and that there will be a robust stakeholder engagement process throughout the next two years. We look forward to being partners in that process and look forward to the opportunity to help transform this program to better serve providers, parents, and families.

Sincerely,

Courtney Graham  
Political Strategist  
SEIU Local 503, OPEU