



February 15, 2021

House Committee on Early Childhood

Testimony in Support of HB 3073 & HB 2503

Chair Power, Vice-Chairs Reynolds and Zika, members of the House Early Childhood Committee:

On behalf of the 6,543 members of PCUN, **I express our support for House Bills 3073 and 2503 to take the first steps in addressing our child care crisis in Oregon.** At PCUN, we work to empower farm workers and working Latinx families and to improve the working and living conditions of Oregon's agricultural workers.

Farm workers are among the poorest workers in Oregon. Child farm workers risk their safety, health, and education working in the fields because their parents do not earn enough to be able to afford child care. Hazardous conditions are routine, including pesticide exposure, extreme heat and lack of shade and adequate clean drinking water.

Even though affordable, culturally responsive and comprehensive child care is often out of reach for our members, child care providers--who are disproportionately Black, Indigenous, and women of color--are also among the lowest-paid workers in Oregon. In 2018, the median wage of preschool teachers was \$13.95 an hour, and was \$11.86 for child care workers in Oregon.¹ This year has made even clearer how essential child care is—it is essential work that makes all other work possible—and yet, we do not compensate providers accordingly.

Programs like Employment Related Day Care (ERDC) that are supposed to help low-income families access child care do not work practically for many farm worker families. The ERDC subsidy is attached to work hours and while some workers have permanent year-round jobs, many farm workers are seasonal or move from employer to employer throughout the year. The constant change and potential for long gaps between employment means the

¹ <https://familyforwardoregon.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/FFO-Child-Care-Report-2019-REV.pdf>

children of farm workers could lose their child care slot mid-year putting strain on the parents, child care provider, and threatening the continuity of care for children. **HB 2503 would ensure eligibility for at least one year, providing much needed stability for farm worker families who qualify for ERDC.** Furthermore, House Bill 2503 follows bipartisan legislation like Cover All Kids (SB 588, 2017) and would ensure access to ERDC for every eligible child regardless of documentation status.

Finally, it is critical to our state's economic recovery and the long term economic stability of Latina women that we address the child care crisis. Latinas continue to be hit hard by the economic crisis with a 9.1% unemployment rate in December 2020, that is about 1 in 11 Latinas. By comparison, the unemployment rate for white men ages 20 and over was 5.8% in December.² Women are being forced out of the workforce at unprecedented rates to take on increased caregiving needs at home. The loss of skills, tenure and income among women of color will shape the U.S. economy for years to come by making it more difficult for moms of color to re-enter the workforce without viable child care options, earn the same amount as their white counterpart, or reach supervisor and management positions.

Every Oregon family deserves access to high quality, affordable, and culturally relevant child care--including farmworker families--and every child care provider should be paid a wage that reflects the essential work they do. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bills 3073 and 2503.

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² <https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/December-Jobs-Day.pdf>