

IMAGINE BLACK

Testimony in Support of HB 4005

Joy Alise Davis

February 2, 2022

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 4005. My name is Joy Alise Davis and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of Imagine Black. Our mission is to help our Black community imagine the alternatives we deserve and build our political participation and leadership to achieve those alternatives.

We are writing to offer support for House Bill 4005 because we know that access to child care is necessary for joyful children, thriving families, and a strong economy. The pandemic has made clear that without care work, no other work can happen. Child care provides the necessary infrastructure for Oregon's essential workforce to continue to work, and we have seen the devastating impact on employment when parents could not find child care, especially for mothers.

Despite how prohibitively expensive child care is for parents, child care providers (who are disproportionately Black, Indigenous, and women of color) are among the lowest-paid workers in Oregon. In 2018, the median wage of preschool teachers, many of whom are college-educated, was \$13.95 an hour, and was \$11.86 for child care workers in Oregon.

Child care workers are paid so poorly that 53% of them nationally rely on one or more public benefits, whether Food Stamps, Medicaid, EITC, or TANF.¹

Average annual wages in child care are about half the all-industry Oregon average.² This year has made even clearer how essential child care is—it is essential work that makes all other work possible—and yet, we don't compensate providers accordingly. Oregon providers deserve better.

If we want to continue flourishing and growing as a state, we need to invest in essential infrastructure that allows Oregonians to thrive. Working parents account for 31% of our labor force. If a third of our state can't consistently and reliably show up to work, we're in big trouble. In fact, due to employee child care issues, businesses nationally lose \$3 billion in revenue annually according to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

In 2021, the legislature passed HB 3073 which responded to the state's child care crisis and provided immediate and long-term relief to Oregon families most in need of child care by establishing the Department of Early Learning and Care (DELIC) as an independent agency, consolidating child care and early learning administration, and by making needed reforms to the state's child care subsidy program: Employment Related Day Care (ERDC).

¹ <https://cscce.berkeley.edu/early-childhood-workforce-2018-index/>

² <https://familyforwardoregon.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/FFO-Child-Care-Report-2019-REV.pdf>

IMAGINE BLACK

These were essential first steps to streamline our state's administration, but more is needed to ensure we have a child care workforce that can meet the needs of Oregon's families during and beyond the pandemic. Child care providers need additional support that rectifies the decades of financial scarcity they have experienced. It actually invests in building more child care supply, compensating our providers and educators better, and that grows the capacity of the new Department of Early Learning and Care. HB 4005 will:

- Support providers and child care affordability for subsidy-eligible families by increasing subsidy rates to the 90th percentile of the 2020 child care market rate.
- Support Oregon's child care systems development through HB 3073 Implementation with increased capacity to stand up the new Department of Early Learning and Care.
- Delay fire code requirements on in-home child care providers to prioritize building new provider capacity while still keeping kids safe.

Additionally, we support increasing child care slots through investing in new provider grants, strengthening our state's Child Care Resource & Referral Centers, and direct relief payments to the child care workforce. Without investing in new providers and helping existing providers expand, we cannot meet current demands. We will be even further behind when implementing new state, and likely federal, expanded eligibility to child care subsidies.

Every Oregon family deserves access to high-quality, affordable, and culturally relevant child care. Every child care provider should be paid a wage that reflects the essential work they do. Imagine Black urges your support for HB 4005.

Sincerely,
Joy Alise Davis

Imagine Black
(503) 764-9019
imagineblack.org