



Date: February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2022  
To: House Committee on Early Childhood  
From: Crystalyn Black, Policy Analyst for the Urban League of Portland  
Re: Child Care for Oregon 2022, HB 4005

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 Crystalyn Black, and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the Urban League of Portland. The Urban League of Portland is one of Oregon's oldest civil rights and social service organizations, empowering African Americans and others to achieve equality in education, employment, health, economic security, and quality of life. We do this by investing in stable housing; through workforce development; community health; education and well-being; for our youth, adults, and seniors. Our culturally specific programs and services, combined with our powerful advocacy and civic engagement, empowers Black communities to thrive across Oregon and SW Washington.

We are writing to offer support for House Bill 4005 because we know that access to childcare is necessary for joyful children, thriving Black families, and a strong economy. Childcare 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 childcare, especially for mothers; the pandemic has made clear that without care work, no other work can happen.

In the Urban League of Portland's 2015 report, State of Black Oregon, Latricia Tillman, MPH (then Director of Public Health, Multnomah Couth Health Department) and Lawrence Wallack, DrPH (then Director, Center for Public Health Studies, Portland State University) outline the importance of protecting the first 1,000 days of a child's life which are the most critical to its development. Central to protecting this developmental period is the sense of stability for the mother and her children, stability that previously was rooted in family-based care. Before, whole families lived together or were within proximity and could provide cost free childcare. But in the name of urban renewal, the Black community has been displaced, and that proximity was been destroyed. Now families rely on others to fill that void and it comes at a cost, not only financially but socially.

Now, childcare is primarily funded by families that cannot afford the true costs associated with care for children. While parents are unable to afford care, childcare providers (who are disproportionately Black, Indigenous, and women of color) are among the lowest-paid workers in Oregon, making \$11.86 an hour. Average annual wages in childcare are about half the all-industry Oregon average. Not only are these women of color, making low wages, but they are not charging enough to cover the costs to provide care, often subsidizing a lack of public investment in the system with their low wages. The current funding structure is unsustainable and as a result, every county in Oregon is a childcare desert for at least one age group of children. This year has made even clearer how essential childcare is—it is essential work that makes all other work possible—and yet, we don't compensate providers accordingly. This is an issue of equity.

Hardest hit are the 350,000 Oregonians (17% of the labor force) many of whom work in front line occupations that do not allow them to work from home. Of the options that parents might have, not all of them meet their families' unique needs—like irregular work schedules or



language spoken—and parents across the state often find themselves patching together care just so they can get to work. This is especially true for women. The economic impacts of COVID-19 on women have been sustained throughout the pandemic. In December, about 2 in 5 unemployed women had been out of work for 6 months or longer, including about 41% of Black women, 38% of Latinas, and 44% of Asian women. If we don't act now, we are facing decades of setbacks for women's economic security with the largest burden placed on women who identify as Black, Indigenous, and/or other people of color (BIPOC).

In 2021, the legislature passed HB 3073 which responded to the state's childcare crisis and provided immediate and long-term relief to Oregon families most in need of childcare but more is needed to ensure we have a childcare workforce that can meet the needs of Oregon's families during and beyond the pandemic. Childcare providers need additional support that rectifies the decades of financial scarcity they have experienced and that invests in building more childcare supply, in compensating our providers and educators better, and that grows the capacity of the new Department of Early Learning and Care. House Bill 4005 will:

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

Additionally, we support increasing childcare slots through investing in new provider grants, strengthening our state's Child Care Resource & Referral Centers, and direct relief payments to the childcare workforce. Without investing in new providers and helping existing providers expand, we are unable to meet current demands and will be even further behind when implementing new state, and likely federal, expanded eligibility to childcare subsidies.

Every Oregon family deserves access to high quality, affordable, and culturally relevant childcare, and every childcare provider should be paid a wage that reflects the essential work they do. The Urban League of Portland urges your support for House Bill 4005.

Respectfully,

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