

Submitter: Rebecca Ellis
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood
Measure: HB4005

February 2, 2022

To: House Committee on Early Childhood
From: Rebecca Ellis, Bend
Re: Child Care and HB 4005

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 4005. My name is Rebecca Ellis. I am the director of a non-profit certified childcare center called ReVillage in Bend, Oregon, which opened in May of 2021. ReVillage was created in response to both the scarcity of childcare slots available in Central Oregon and the financial barriers families face which prevent access to high-quality childcare.

Some of these barriers include navigating ERDC, which limits reimbursement rates to our center, therefore excluding those who qualify from a slot within their financial means. The ERDC application process also makes it complicated to understand eligibility and when a parent's job status changes, they can lose their childcare spot, making it difficult to find work again when in-between employment. ERDC also puts an additional strain on childcare providers, as the application process and ongoing monthly paperwork is a burdensome task. We want to be able to offer these subsidized slots to support families and help our communities thrive, but the risk to our ability to stay open and quite literally pay the bills makes it difficult to participate in these programs.

At ReVillage, we have become creative in our model in order to help alleviate some of these barriers for low-income families. Alongside a co-op model that utilizes parent aides to reduce the need for more employees, we have partnered with organizations in the region in order to lower our tuition costs so families are able to access the care they need. However, the cost of providing childcare is high. In the 9 months we have been operating, we have already had to increase our employee wages in order to remain competitive and retain high quality staff, and we are looking at possibly having to increase our tuition to not go into the red each month. Access to grants has helped us float by, but we need more sustainable options that meet the needs of both care providers and families of young children. This burden should not fall solely on the shoulders of care providers.

We know that families with consistent, affordable childcare are able to be more

dependable employees, provide financially for their family without the strain put on their homelife of constant stress and anxiety, as well as give their young children stability during the most important developmental years of their life. High quality childcare leads to a healthier and more equitable community, workforce and future generation. As both a parent and child care provider, I ask you to please take these first steps to address our child care crisis in Oregon and pass House Bill 4005 to increase childcare subsidy reimbursements to providers, support employee wages and staff retention now through additional grants made easily available to childcare providers, and support new providers by offering grants for the steep start-up fees for opening a new center.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Ellis