



Testimony in Support of HB 4005

Khanh Le

February 2, 2022

Dear 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 Khanh Le, Executive Director at Unite Oregon, and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of our organization. Unite Oregon is led by people of color, immigrants and refugees, rural communities, and people experiencing poverty, and we work across Oregon to build a unified intercultural movement for justice.

We are writing in support of House Bill 4005 because we believe that every Oregon family deserves access to high quality, affordable, and culturally relevant child care. Throughout the pandemic we have seen an extreme lack of accessible child care, which negatively impacts children, parents, providers and workers. Our families need affordability, flexibility to accommodate different work schedules of working class parents, and providers that are BIPOC, culturally specific, and in rural areas. To uphold these needs, we must make adequate investments in our state's child care supply and pay providers wages that reflect the essential work they do.

Child care is primarily funded by families that cannot afford the true costs associated with care for children. While parents are unable to afford care, child care providers 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. More so, child care providers, who are Black, Indigenous, and women of color, are disproportionately amongst 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.¹ The current funding structure is unsustainable and as a result, retention of child care workers is extremely difficult and every county in Oregon is a child care desert for at least one age group of children.²

Our state must ensure that we have a child care workforce that can meet the needs of Oregon's families. We need to invest in new providers and help existing providers expand to meet our current child care demands. 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.
- Implement HB 3073 with increased capacity to stand up the new Department of Early Learning and Care.

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

² <https://health.oregonstate.edu/sites/health.oregonstate.edu/files/early-learners/pdf/oregon-child-care-deserts-01-29-2019.pdf>

- Increase child care slots by investing in new provider grants, strengthening our state's Child Care Resource & Referral Centers, and direct relief payments to the child care workforce
- Delay fire code requirements on in-home child care providers to prioritize building new provider capacity while still keeping kids safe.

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

Sincerely,
Khanh Le
Unite Oregon, Executive Director