

Submitter: Erika Bucio

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Human Services, Mental Health and Recovery

Measure: SB1591

Dear Chair Gelser Blouin, Vice Chair Robinson, and members of the committee,

My name is Erika Bucio, and I live in Medford. I am writing in support of SB 1591. I believe that child care issues affect all aspects of our state's economy. Until my recent experience with my family member I didn't understand the depth of our state's child care issues. I believe that we need to move forward with emergency child care solutions like the ones proposed in SB 1591.

I have a family member who is a mentally disabled adult. The pandemic has affected him extremely negatively. Two years ago he used to be able to go to a community care and support center for mentally disabled adults. While there he would do daily activities, such as playing sports with friends and attending organized events. Since the beginning of the pandemic shutdown, he has been unable to do any of these regular daily activities. The state began providing a personal support worker to care for him alone at home.

For nearly two years my family has experienced a huge turn over with the staff from the state. My family member has had a new support worker every two to three weeks for the past multiple months. Many of these workers have been mothers. With all of the ups and downs with COVID-19, many schools and child care providers have had to close their doors or enforce restrictions for various reasons, like state regulations or because there has been a COVID outbreak scare amongst the children, for example. When this happens, my family member's support caretakers are forced to drop everything to pick up their children. They have no other options for child care. Parents have been uncertain about when their children will be allowed to return to school or child care, and are then forced to choose to care for their children, leaving their work behind. For my family member's caretakers this is a huge sacrifice because they want and need to work. For us it means we don't know who will be there to be the caretaker.

Every time we lose a support worker due to lack of accessible child care in our area, it negatively affects my entire family as well. My family member has such a difficult time adjusting to new support workers, especially when he is forced to do so often. It takes time for him to trust someone and feel comfortable. By the time he has begun to build a relationship and routine, his worker disappears indefinitely and he does not understand. This is an ongoing cycle, and sometimes we don't have a support caretaker for weeks at a time. The state has even told us a few times that they don't know if or when they will be able to provide a support worker to care for him. During

these weeks without any support, my family has had to cover the care for him since he's unable to care for himself on his own. At the same time, the support workers who are parents on the other side of this situation are also struggling to find care for their children.

This is a cycle that harms all of us, and this is why we need real solutions. Through these experiences, I have come to understand that we desperately need to invest in our state's child care system. Without adequate child care options, parents are not able to work reliably, and this affects the lives of the people they work with and serve every day. SB 1591 will make child care more accessible by increasing available slots and available child care supply. I believe that this is one step in the right direction to solving our state's child care issue, which is directly connected to every aspect of our state's economy. Please vote yes on SB 1591. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Erika Bucio