

Submitter: Juanita Estrada

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services

Measure: HB2727

Dear Chair Reynolds and members of the committee,

I should start by saying that high-quality child care is essential for the proper growth and development of our children. Early childhood education shapes and prepares future Oregon students for healthy development, as well as lays the foundation for later school success. Child care not only ensures that children are cared for in a safe environment while their parents work, but also promotes cognitive and academic development and fosters social and emotional development.

FACES of America has, for the past eight years, provided this much-needed service to our low-income community, both in English and Spanish. The first years were very difficult, being a non-profit organization we depended only on the low tuition fees that some parents could afford, activities to raise funds and small donations from our own members. Later we met the requirements and were approved by the Human Resources Department, through the ERDC Program. This was a very important help for many low-income families.

In addition, many children of working parents spend a significant part of their hours at our Center. There they eat most of their meals and interact with their teachers on occasion, longer than with their parents. Thus, the program works to ensure that children's nutritional needs are met and that its staff are adequately trained to provide age-appropriate education and activities.

The expenses of a center like FACES are very high, starting with the rent of the premises, salaries, materials, administration expenses, etc. It is impossible to provide free services without having the support of the State, in the form of subsidies, or of foundations and community organizations.

Thanks to Preschool Promise, Equity Fund, and OCF Summer Funds, FACES has been able to provide very high quality services to over 100 families per year for the last 3 years. The need for these services is so much greater, it would take countless centers like FACES to meet the need for child care services in our State of Oregon.

FACES is now in a worrying situation, as the lease for our building expires at the end of August. This means that this could be the last year of our Dual Language Preschool and Child Care Center, "Little FACES". The building is now for sale and we could not buy it because the bank only lends us 55% of the amount and we would have to have the remaining 45% on hand and the price of the building is very high.

This is one of the many obstacles that those of us who work in this type of business face. Support in the infrastructure area is crucial for FACES right now, we are in a go-or-close situation. Oregon has experienced the closure of many centers and home care since it is not a profitable business, the expenses are exorbitant compared to the income. Only love for what we do sustains us and encourages us to move forward.

I hope you will support both HB 2727 and HB 3005, they would both provide much needed support for providers like myself.

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