February 15, 2023

To: Chair Reynolds, Vice Chairs Nguyen and Scharf, and Members of the Committee

On behalf of the American Association of University Women of Oregon (AAUW of OR), we express our strong support for House Bill 3029.

Access to affordable child care in Oregon depends on two critical factors – the availability of a trained workforce and affordable facilities. Without the effective operation in both of these areas, Oregon's children and families will continue to face barriers in accessing the quality child care they so urgently need.

Research has shown that early childhood experiences affect the development of the brain's architecture, which provides the foundation for all future learning, behavior and health.[1] High quality childcare helps children be more successful in school, and has shown improved health and increased earning outcomes over children's lifetimes.[2] Our children are our future.

Oregon families unfortunately suffer from the limited availability and high cost of child care. According to research in this area, "Oregon is in a child care crisis."[3] Child care costs up to $1,200 per month per child for infants and toddlers in center-based care, which is prohibitive even if parents can find a child care slot. This cost is comparable to in-state tuition and fees for a year at a state university.

The lack of personnel to staff child care and pre-school facilities is a also major problem. Right now, individuals choosing to be child care and pre-school teachers have little incentive to pursue training and education coursework. The incentives in this bill will aid individuals in obtaining training, paying for education, and working in the field.

Economically, access to affordable child care is crucial to working families and should be an immediate priority for all Oregonians.

While perhaps not solving all problems of access to quality and reliable child care, HB 3029 provides significant movement in the right direction. We urge you to vote for a DO PASS recommendation.

Respectfully Submitted,

Claire Berger, State Public Policy Chair,
American Association of University Women of Oregon

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[1] Why Early Childhood Matters, https://www.ncdhhs.gov/about/department-initiatives/early-childhood/why-early-childhood-matters.

[2] Why High Quality Matters, https://greatstarttoquality.org/why-high-quality-matters/ - :~:text=High-quality child care helps,of investing in early childhood.

[3] Oregon's Unmet Child Care Needs It's Time to Invest: The Future Depends on It. https://familyforwardoregon.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/FFO-Child-Care-Report-2019-REV.pdf