



OREGON WORKFORCE PARTNERSHIP

KIM PARKER-LLERENAS
OWP Chair

Willamette Workforce Partnership

ERIN CARPENTER

Eastern Oregon Workforce Board

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HEATHER DESART

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HEATHER FICHT

East Cascade Works

ANDREW MCGOUGH

Work Systems Inc

HEATHER STAFFORD

Rogue Workforce Partnership

KYLE STEVENS

OWP Treasurer
Southwestern Oregon
Workforce Investment Board

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 3029. We are Oregon Workforce Partnership submitting this testimony on behalf of Oregon's nine Local Workforce Boards. The Oregon Workforce Partnership (OWP) is a nonprofit workforce service organization comprised of over 200 community leaders representing business, education, public workforce, and elected officials from Oregon's nine Local Workforce Development areas. Oregon has an integrated one-stop service delivery system built on a standardized model to provide a flexible, unified workforce education and training system branded as WorkSource Oregon (WSO). OWP members oversee and invest in the local WSO centers within our respective regions to ensure all Oregonians have access to the skills and training necessary to support the talent needs of industry.

We write to express our support for HB 3029. Childcare is a critical industry that supports families and every other industry's ability to thrive and/or profit. Our support of HB 3029 that directs the Department of Early Learning and Care to establish and implement child care provider incentive program comes with a request to connect with and leverage the use of the Local Workforce Boards. This bill would advance opportunities for the workforce in Oregon, and we would like to partner to coordinate this work with the public workforce system. As such, we can help, support, and leverage. We would recommend identifying Oregon's Legislatively created nine Local Workforce Boards as a collaborator and strategic partner.

Child care provides the necessary infrastructure for Oregon's essential workforce to continue to work, and we have seen the impact on employment when parents cannot find child care, particularly for mothers. Child care is primarily funded by families who 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 their costs to provide care, often subsidizing a lack of public investment in the system with their low wages.

This unsustainable funding structure is why every county in Oregon is a child care desert for at least one age group of children. Additionally, despite how expensive child care is for parents, child care providers (who are disproportionately Black, Indigenous, and women of color) are among 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. Average annual wages in child care are about half the all-industry Oregon average.

This year has made us realize even more how essential child care is—it is essential work that makes all other work possible—yet we don't compensate providers accordingly. More than six in ten (62.2 percent) Black women are in the workforce, making them one of the two racial/ethnic groups of women with the highest labor force participation rate among women and the only group of women with a higher labor force participation rate than their male counterparts. We must support Black women and mothers; they are the engine behind our economy. 81% of rural commu-

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nities in Oregon are designated as child care deserts—meaning at most those counties only have available slots for a third of the children who live there. Child care workers are paid so poorly that 53% of them nationally rely on one or more public benefits, whether Food Stamps, Medicaid, EITC, or TANF. Parents are scrambling to find reliable child care options as they continue to work either from home or in their workplaces. Research shows that investing in caregiving systems produces twice as many jobs per dollar invested than physical infrastructure investment. People of color are more likely to serve as frontline workers or care providers in Oregon. Our work makes all other work possible. Oregon must prioritize our needs when it comes to child and family care—without us, there will be no economic recovery.

Investments in childcare are critical and so is increasing coordination of these investments with the public workforce system and Local Workforce Boards. While our state has taken necessary steps and made critical investments to address the child care crisis in the last two years, without continued investment in child care infrastructure—supply-building, facilities, workforce investments, affordability, access—this crisis will continue to have a profound economic impact on those who are already financially vulnerable.

Every Oregon family deserves access to high quality, affordable, and culturally relevant child care, but in order to do so, we must create accessible, equitable workforce pathways, increase compensation, and stabilize the child care field. Please contact our trusted representatives Iris Maria-Chavez and/or Doug Riggs on any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Thank you for your consideration.



Kim Parker-Llerenas



Heather Stafford



Erin Carpenter



Ashley Espinoza



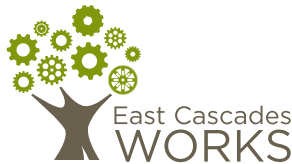
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