

February 20, 2023

To: House Committee on Early Childhood & Human Services
From: Amy Powers, Washington County, OR
Re: Child Care House Bills 2504, 2991, and 3029
Email: amy@apano.org

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bills 2504, 2991 and 3026. My name is Amy Powers, I live in Washington County, I am a parent of two kids, and I was a child care provider for 10 years.

I'm writing in support of these bills because I know that access to child care is necessary for joyful children, thriving families, and a strong economy. The pandemic has made clear that without care work, no other work can happen.

I was born and raised in Washington County and I know first hand how difficult it was for my parents to work and have child care coverage while they worked swing shifts and graveyard shifts. And now as a working mom, quality child care, access to child care, and livable wages for child care providers are my top priority. Like my parents, I struggled to access affordable, quality childcare for both of my kids.

When we were looking for care for my oldest, I was working a part-time job providing care for school-aged kids. I was caring for kids and couldn't even afford childcare for my own kid. I ended up leaving my non profit job to work at a childcare facility so that I could enroll my own kid in the same place. When she was four years old, she had a terrible accident and medical bills piled up. Again, I could no longer afford child care and pay the hospital bills at the same time.

My youngest kid's experience had to be put on hold due to the global pandemic. I was at a loss and, like many parents, felt like we were in unknown territory. My little one missed out on building her social skills, academic skills, and most importantly she missed out on making new friends. After being on a waitlist for a year, I finally got her into a part time program. She loved being with kids her own age, developed positive relationships with the teachers, and really enjoyed the

curriculum. However, during this 9-month part time program, her primary teacher left the program due to the low wages that had no benefits. This was heartbreaking for the class, and for us as a community of parents, that this system didn't value providers to pay a livable wage. After quite some time, the program hired a new primary teacher. And then she also resigned. Then after quite some time, the program hired a third, new primary teacher. And then she also resigned. As you can imagine, this experience was challenging and the impact was most felt by the kids.

My experiences lead me to urge you to pass HBs 2504, 2991, and 3029 to take these necessary steps our child care system desperately needs. Every Oregon family deserves access to quality, affordable, and culturally relevant child care. Providers must have the support and resources to provide care, and providers need accessible, equitable workforce pathways and increased compensation and support.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Amy Powers,
Mom of 2
Co Executive Director at APANO