

DATE: February 20, 2023
TO: House Committee on Early Childhood and Human Services
FROM: Sammi Teo, Public Policy Advocate
RE: Support for HB 2991, HB 2504, HB 3029



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

Oregon Food Bank's mission is to eliminate hunger and its root causes. We pursue this goal in two key ways: we foster community connections to help people access nutritious food today; and we advocate to change policies that drive hunger and poverty. This is our moment to embrace our shared values, care for each other and take bold action in support of *all* Oregonians.

Access to child care is linked to economic stability, work opportunities, and food security.

Child care is the work that makes all other work possible, and is an underappreciated part of our state's essential infrastructure. Our entire economy is dependent on equitable access to child care. When caregivers who want to work cannot find affordable child care, their families are more likely to live in poverty. This burden is disproportionately carried by women who provide a larger share of uncompensated care work. **Lack of options for child care is among the many reasons that households led by single moms are nearly 4x as likely to experience food insecurity¹ than the general population².**

We need a robust child care workforce that provides accessible career pathways.

Child care accessibility was in crisis before the pandemic and has only gotten worse. Before the pandemic, every county in Oregon was a "child care desert" for at least one age group before the pandemic. **In Oregon, we see an annual turnover in the child care workforce of between 25-30%.** Today, there are more than 8 kids for every available slot. The stability of our child care workforce affects our children's ability to feel secure and to establish the bonds they need to grow and thrive - not just while in care, but well into the future. We need to strengthen our child care workforce by addressing barriers and developing career pathways.

HB 2991 will utilize community-driven research and engagement to immediately address barriers to becoming a child care provider, while including a taskforce to address further barriers and create a longer-term early learning and child care workforce development and support strategy for Oregon.

HB 2504 will support the development of a culturally responsive child care workforce by addressing barriers that childhood professionals with degrees from other countries have to entering this workforce.

HB 3029 will create an incentive and assistance program that is focused on providing financial support through covering education or licensing costs, to providing housing support to increase recruitment and retention among the child care workforce.

We urge you to support HB 2991, HB 2504, and HB 3029. Thank you.

¹ https://liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/sites/liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/files/2022-11/oregon_food_insecurity_rates_2019-2021.pdf

² <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/104656/err-309.pdf?v=3033.9>

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