

Submitter: Caitlin Curtis
On Behalf Of: My international staff
Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services
Measure: HB2504

Hello

My name is Caitlin Curtis and I am an Education Coordinator for a Head Start and Early Head Start program in SW Portland run by the non-profit Neighborhood House. The majority of the students and families we serve are refugees and/or were born and raised in Africa or the Middle East, as are the majority of my teaching staff. An important part of my job is hiring and onboarding new staff and it is extremely important that we hire staff who represent the children and families that we serve in order to build a strong and trusting community in our school and engage in anti-biased environments and curriculum. In hiring staff for my school I've run into a challenge when it comes to applicant's qualifications for certain positions if their higher education was outside of the United States. Many of the applicants we see have attended university and have degrees in Early Childhood Education or related fields and unfortunately those degrees aren't supported when they come to the US. We aren't able to hire them for positions they are qualified for which in turn makes it hard to staff our classrooms and enroll children. It is so important that we have a diverse educators and many of the people who are trying to get into the early learning and care workforce are unable to or are not able to make a living wage to support their families. Please consider passing this bill in order to remove barriers for international early childhood professionals. Thank you.