



TO: House Committee on Early Childhood & Human Services
FR: Ira Cuello-Martinez, PCUN
RE: Support for HB 2504, 2991, 3029

February 20, 2023

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

My name is Ira Cuello-Martinez and I am the policy and advocacy director at PCUN, Oregon's Farmworker Union. PCUN works to empower farmworkers and working Latinx families and improve their working conditions through community building, organizing, and policy advocacy.

We strongly support House Bills 2504, 2991, and 3029 because we know that access to childcare is necessary for joyful children, thriving families, and a strong economy. The pandemic has clearly shown us that no other work can happen without care work. Child care provides the necessary infrastructure for Oregon's essential workforce to continue to work, and we continue to see the impact on employment when parents cannot find child care, especially for mothers.

Farmworkers are among the poorest workers in Oregon, with a median annual wage of \$29,680 (U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics 2021).¹ Additionally, hazardous conditions are routine, including pesticide exposure, extreme heat and lack of shade and adequate clean drinking water.

Farmworker families often scramble to find reliable child care options as they continue to work. They are among the hardest hit and are part of the 350,000 Oregonians (17% of the labor force) who are unable to work from home given the nature of their work.² Of the options that parents might have, not all of them meet farmworker families' unique needs—such as early and long work schedules or language spoken—and parents across the state often find themselves patching together care just so they can get to work.

Working parents account for 31% of our labor force.³ If a third of our state cannot consistently and reliably show up to work, we will face many issues down the line. In fact, due to workers' challenges in finding child care, businesses nationally lose \$3 billion in revenue annually according to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.⁴

¹ <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/farming-fishing-and-forestry/agricultural-workers.htm#tab-5>

² <https://oregoneconomicanalysis.com/2020/08/27/covid-challenges-working-oregon-parents-graphic-of-the-week/>

³ [https://www.qualityinfo.org/-/for-oregon-parents-working-is-the-norm#:~:text=How%20much%20of%20the%20workforce,to%20the%20nation%20\(33%25\)](https://www.qualityinfo.org/-/for-oregon-parents-working-is-the-norm#:~:text=How%20much%20of%20the%20workforce,to%20the%20nation%20(33%25))

⁴ <https://www.uschamberfoundation.org/early-childhood-education/the-business-case>

The Oregon legislature can take steps to address childcare through the following bills:

- HB 2504 will support the development of a cultural response child care workforce by addressing barriers impeding entry into this workforce by international early childhood professionals.
- HB 2991 will remove unnecessary barriers to professional credentials through our state's Online Registry System (ORO) by addressing issues such as an overly burdensome credentialing process and a lack of linguistically-diverse access.
- HB 3029 will create an incentive and assistance program for child care workforce 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 believe 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 childcare field. House Bills 2504, 2991, and 3029 help us reach this goal and PCUN strongly urges your support for these bills.

Ira Cuello-Martinez
Policy and Advocacy Director
PCUN