



Testimony in Support of HB 2504, HB 2991, and HB 3029
Judy Strand
February 20, 2023

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bills 2504, 2991, and 3029. My name is Judy Strand, CEO Metropolitan Family Service, and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of Metropolitan Family Service, a non-profit organization focused on moving beyond the limitations of poverty, inequity and social isolation.

We are writing to offer support for these bills because we 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. 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.

- Child care is primarily funded by families that 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 the costs to provide care, often subsidizing a lack of public investment in the system with their low wages. The current funding structure is unsustainable and as a result, every county in Oregon is a child care desert for at least one age group of children¹.
- Despite how prohibitively 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.² This year has made even clearer how essential child care is—it is essential work that makes all other work possible—and 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.³
- 81% of rural communities in Oregon are designated as child care deserts--meaning *at most* those

¹<https://health.oregonstate.edu/sites/health.oregonstate.edu/files/early-learners/pdf/oregon-child-care-deserts-01-29-2019.pdf>

² <https://familyforwardoregon.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/FFO-Child-Care-Report-2019-REV.pdf>

³ https://www.domesticworkers.org/sites/default/files/SOBW_report2017_compressed.pdf



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counties only have available slots for a third of the children who live there.⁴

- 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.⁵
- Parents are scrambling to find reliable child care options as they continue to work either from home or in their workplaces. Hardest hit are the 350,000 Oregonians (17% of the labor force) who do not work in occupations that allow them to work from home.⁶ Of the options that parents might have, not all of them meet their families' unique needs—like irregular 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 force⁷. If a third of our state can't consistently and reliably show up to work, we're in big trouble. In fact, due to employee child care issues, businesses nationally lose \$3 billion in revenue annually⁸ according to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.
- Research shows that investing in caregiving systems produces twice as many jobs per dollar invested than physical infrastructure investment.⁹
- 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.

While our state has taken necessary steps and made critical investments to address the child 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: the disproportionately Black, Indigenous, and women of color who make up the child care workforce, and low-income and families of color who struggle to access the quality care they need.

- 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.

⁴ <https://oregonearlylearning.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Supply-and-Demand-Study-1oct20.pdf>

⁵ <https://csce.berkeley.edu/early-childhood-workforce-2018-index/>

⁶ <https://oregoneconomicanalysis.com/2020/08/27/covid-challenges-working-oregon-parents-graphic-of-the-week/>

⁷ [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).)

⁸ <https://www.uschamberfoundation.org/early-childhood-education/the-business-case>

⁹ http://www.levyinstitute.org/pubs/wp_610.pdf



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- 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.

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. House Bills 2504, 2991, and 3029 help us reach this goal and [Org Name] strongly urges your support for these bills.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Judy Strand'.

Judy Strand
Metropolitan Family Service