

Submitter: Jessie Hernandez
On Behalf Of: Bill HB 2504
Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services
Measure: HB2504

Good afternoon Chair Raynolds and Vice Chairs Nguyen (Nuewn), Scharf, and members of the committee. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak in support of BILL 2504, 2991, and 3029. My name is Jessie Hernandez and I am one of the supervisors for the Relief Nursery Therapeutic Early Childhood Program. At the Relief Nursery our mission is to support families and children.

Working for 22 years at the RN I have seen the tremendous growth when it comes to working with Spanish Speaking families. At this point 50% of our families are Hispanic. This has inspired me to work hard to find the best and most qualified staff so that the families that we serve get high quality care and support when it comes to HV and in our Therapeutic Preschool Program. At the beginning, we were a much smaller entity and finding teachers was challenging but it has never been as challenging as it is right now given the hiring crises we have been encountering for the last 3 years. However, this is not going to stop us and if we need to work harder to find the qualified staff that we need we will do so even if we have to train teachers who do not have as much experience as it is required. Our commitment to our families is to provide a bilingual bicultural teacher/home visitor for every classroom and every program we offer.

As a supervisor, I have made it my goal to hire teachers that have the knowledge and experience yet when it comes to meeting, the requirements for ORO this does not apply to them. Many of our teachers that we have hired have the degree and experience in Mexico yet when they are here they have to start from zero and not get the paid what they deserve to be paid. What this looks like is that the teachers not only have to be full time workers, they also have to take evening classes and on top of that, some of them are parents with many responsibilities at home. The amount of time that it takes ORO to qualify our staff is huge for us and many other agencies. As well as the process. Many teachers have to pay to have their degrees translated, which is a challenge in itself. We also end up losing teachers that could be a great asset to our agency because of the amount of time they have to wait and because there are other places, where they could go and apply and are paid more. We do not want to and will avoid to any cost to have to use interpreters because we have seen how this is not the most efficient way to serve families.

Please vote in support of this bill. It will make a huge difference on what we do and for the families we serve.