

Submitter: Sky Lockhart

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services

Measure: HB2504

Dear Chair Lisa Reynolds and Vice-Chairs Hoa Nguyen & Anna Scharf,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bills 2504, 2991 and 3029. My name is Sky Lockhart, I live in Portland, OR and I am a parent of an eight year old. School does not cover a full work-day and as I return to more in person work, I am needing more after-care for my work schedule. I'm again reminded of the serious gap of child care that I experienced during 0-5 years of raising my son, there is nowhere near enough after-school care for older ages available to meet the need for families. These bills will mitigate some of the barriers that child care providers and potential future providers face so that parents can find childcare at all ages.

HB 2504, HB 2991 and HB 3029 each work in different ways to help skillful professionals fill this gap of childcare. I am a Social Worker who serves refugees and previously served Native American parents.

Working with refugees, the barrier of academic degrees that are not recognized in the US is one of the most significant barriers for these professionals. Some refugee populations in Oregon, such as African refugees, have the highest level of higher education degrees, and yet are unable to provide their professional services and in low-paid gig work. Additionally, refugees face massive barriers of language and cultural needs in childcare settings. If professionals from these communities could provide their culturally-specific and responsive services to their communities, it would empower these communities in significant ways.

Additionally, when working with Native American parents, there were multiple jobs in childcare that would be a great match. But I would feel hesitant recommending this career path due to low pay, even for higher degree professionals. While the Native community deserves and needs culturally-specific childcare, I didn't feel ethical recommending that they meet this need with such an underfunded field.

These bills will increase the chances that someone will be able to provide these types of care these culturally-specific communities need, as well as the care my family and so many other families need.

The barriers to finding child care that I experienced acutely in my son's 0-5 years of life were the most significant cause of chronic economic insecurity that led to chronic health problems. I live with chronic illness due to the Social Determinants of Health of

childcare. This is not an uncommon story. I hear similar ones from parents on my block and at my son's school. We are ALL struggling. We ALL need access to childcare. Which means we need a much larger and stronger child care workforce. I strongly urge your support for House Bills 2504, 2991 and 3029 so we can take these important steps toward a child care system that fills the childcare gap that impacts most Oregon families and childcare providers.

Please vote yes on all three of these bills.

Thanks for your time.

Sincerely,
Sky Lockhart