

Submitter: Megan McMillan

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Education

Measure: HB5013

Dear Co-Chairs Frederick, McLain and members of the committee,

My name is Megan McMillan and I live in eastern Washington County. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 5013, which will expand investments in our early learning and child care programs and fund the critical work of the Department of Early Learning & Care.

I am a mother to a 3 year old and 6 year old son who has special needs. In Washington County and on the west side of Portland we've seen centers that served hundreds of families close since the pandemic. Every time I've had to search for care it's like a full time job on top of my already full time job. Finding care meant late nights researching a dizzying array of semi-accurate lists maintained by the counties, Facebook groups, and websites to find what my options were and whether they had openings, and how much they cost. Securing care meant time away from work to make phone calls, answer emails, and fill out forms.

I'll note that available, affordable, and excellent childcare is not just a basic need for me, but a game changer for my son with special needs. Any break in the continuity of care sets him back in his development. We witnessed the consequences of this when his school closed during the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis for a few months. The loss of a care setting and routine is extremely disruptive for a kid like my son, and for so many other children who are atypical. But with how unsustainable it is for childcare providers to operate, and with how unaffordable care can be for parents, this dilemma looms for me and so many others. I'll add that the cost of monthly childcare for two kids under five for me is 150% of what I pay for my mortgage. Somehow the cost is outrageous but my son's preschool teachers still make barely more than minimum wage.

Oregon was already a childcare desert and the past couple years have made a bad situation even worse. I urge you to invest all you can into child care and early learning in HB 5013.

Thank you,
Megan McMillan