



To: House Committee on Early Childhood and Human Services
From: Imagine Black
Re: Support for HB 3027-2
Date: March 20, 2023

Chair Reynolds, Vice Chair Nguyen, Vice Chair Scharf and members of the committee: My name is Danita Harris. I am the Director of Movement Building for Imagine Black, an Oregon non-profit focused on building political power for Black Oregonians.

As a society, we know now, more than ever, that childcare is an integral part of our larger economy. High-quality childcare is just as important to our social and economic infrastructure as roads, phones, electricity, and running water. Parents who spend their days working or getting an education need to know that their children are in a safe, healthy environment where they are able to learn and grow. These healthy, safe environments are vital to each child's early brain and learning development and lay the foundation for each child's later experiences in school and society.

Historically, childcare infrastructure has been neglected. Here in Oregon, we've taken important and necessary steps to invest in children. People of all political ideologies agree that investments in our children are critical investments we can make in modern society, and yet, we have continued on the path of cobbling together a labyrinth of programs and access points, reinforcing historical and ongoing social and economic inequities and compounding long-term impacts on Black children.

The ongoing childcare crisis will not be mitigated by continuing to take small steps toward a goal we know requires so much more. The heart of this issue is that Black, Indigenous, and women of color represent the largest parts of the childcare workforce, and low-income families and families of color often have the hardest time accessing quality childcare. Black Oregonians are among those most impacted by the patchwork childcare programs and access that exist in the state now.

HB 3027-2 would bring together a work group focused on creating a cohesive childcare access strategy, with one point through which all families can receive services. The goal here is to eliminate the additional burden put on parents to know which programs exist and which they qualify for, in addition to cutting down application and wait times, which currently make it too difficult for those experiencing crisis to access the very programs they need to change their situations.

I urge you to pass HB 3027-2. Our children cannot continue to wait.

Thank you,

Danita Harris, Deputy Director of Movement Building
Imagine Black