

Submitter: Michelle Lasley
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure: SB5506

April 7, 2023

To: Joint Committee on Ways & Means
From: Michelle Lasley, Portland, OR
Re: Investment in child care

Co-Chairs Senator Steiner and Rep Sanchez, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Michelle Lasley, I live in Portland and I am a parent of a 16 year old. Thank you for this opportunity to weigh in about the state budget. I am writing now to urge you to make child care a top priority.

I didn't plan to become pregnant. I wished I had planned my pregnancy - just so we could have figured out child care. I assumed there would be child care on every corner, and I was wrong. I was finishing school at Portland State, so nearing the end of my pregnancy, I called the on-campus child care and was told I should have been on a waitlist 2 years ago.

There are so many intersections of lack of care - inadequate medical coverage, inadequate resources to help me through the system, and most especially inadequate availability to child care. Even though he had state insurance, we used food stamps, and I was on WIC- I had no idea if I even qualified for child care. Which meant we had to deal with it all on our own. So, while we managed, my career never got started, my ability to earn never got started, my ability to contribute fully to my family never got started.

Eventually, I did find work. The first thing that I could get that would work with our schedule needs, paid \$12/hour. Thankfully, there were spots for my now toddler, but I paid \$9/hour for him to attend that child care center. After taxes, what was I left with? Even when I got a slightly better job and we switched my son's care, the realization hit - I was paying for the privilege of going to work. And, with my years of experience and college degree, I could still only find slightly above entry level work that would fit in the hours I could work - the hours I could afford to work to balance child care.

This was between 2007 and 2010. This was more than 10 years before our global pandemic. We owe our mothers better. We owe our families better. We owe our kids better than this. Please heavily invest in child care this session to expand current

investments and make new ones in our child care programs so we can give mothers and our kids the support they need to begin thriving.

Sincerely,

Michelle Lasley