

Submitter: Ana del Rocio
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure: SB5506

April 8, 2023

To: Joint Committee on Ways & Means
From: Ana del Rocío, Portland, OR
Re: Child Care Funding

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

My name is Ana del Rocío and I live in Portland. Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts with you today.

The state budget is, among other things, an enactment of our values as a state. I know there are many, many pressing issues and competing budgetary pressures we are facing right now. I am here to urge you to prioritize investment in a healthy child care system at the top of your list.

The prohibitive cost and lack of availability of child care are at crisis levels in Oregon. And yet it generally goes unnoticed among lawmakers, as if it's not a responsibility of the state. But the result of that state neglect is that child care for an infant is more expensive than higher education, that many parents can not work because they can not find any available care for their children. That there's almost no care available in rural areas, almost no care that is culturally appropriate and in-language for our immigrant or BIPOC families. That there's almost no care available during "non-standard" work hours (and how many of us even work "standard" hours these days anyway?) The result of that state neglect is also that the essential workers who make up the child care workforce are making poverty-level wages. And that now, in the wake of a pandemic that showed us just how essential child care is, we have fewer and fewer child care providers than we used to.

I have two children and I am a single mother who works full-time. Making ends meet has always been hard. Most of you would not be surprised to hear that mothers like myself struggle with the cost of rent, especially as housing costs are skyrocketing. But you may not be aware that the child care burden is often much worse than the rent burden. That has always been the case for me. I can't work without child care, I can't earn a living without work. If I spend most of my income on child care, there is very little left for other basic necessities like rent and food and clothing and health care.

It doesn't have to be this way. With state investment in universal, quality, accessible child care, we can solve the child care crisis. The legislature has multiple opportunities this year to pass bills that will move our state toward an equitable system. If child care is the work that makes all other work possible – and it is – then a strong, universal, equitable, culturally responsive, accessible child care system is critical to everything else in our state.

Please prioritize child care in this budget.

Thank you for your time.

Ana del Rocío