DEB PATTERSON
STATE SENATOR/SENADORA ESTATAL
DISTRICT/DISTRITO 10

OREGON STATE SENATE/SENADO DEL ESTADO DE OREGON

Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Weber, and Honorable Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Deb Patterson, State Senator from District 10, which includes South Salem, West Salem, Monmouth, and Independence. I would like to add my support to HB 2504 A, which would direct the Department of Early Learning and Care to adopt standards and processes to reduce barriers that impede international early childhood professionals from entering Oregon's early learning workforce.

The state of Oregon is experiencing a severe childcare shortage that predated the pandemic, which led to a further loss of roughly 20% of childcare slots. Access to childcare is extremely important to working parents, but we are not giving childcare workers the support that they need. In 2022, 52% of surveyed providers said that they felt burdened or overwhelmed, and were five times more likely to report symptoms of clinical anxiety than the general population. These issues are reflected in high provider turnover rates of 25-30% in Oregon.

HB 2504 A is an important step towards both addressing childcare provider shortages in general, and meeting a need for inclusive, culturally specific childcare that has gone unmet as a result. In 2022, families from diverse backgrounds indicated that finding culturally and linguistically responsive care for their children was important to them, but difficult to achieve. HB 2504 A would help meet this need by requiring the Department of Early Learning and Care to work to reduce barriers for international early childhood professionals trying to enter the workforce in Oregon, establishing minimum qualifications while reducing administrative inefficiencies.

Essentially, this bill would make it easier for international childcare providers to work in Oregon, both supplementing a strained workforce, and expanding access to culturally responsive care. I urge your aye vote.

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