

Submitter: Taylor Harvey

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means

Measure: SB5506

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

My name is Taylor Harvey and I live in Milwaukie Oregon. I am writing to urge you to prioritize funding for childcare in the state budget.

As parents, our access to care for our children has always been limited. We do not have family available to help us look after our children. Our daughter was born 6 years ago while I was still working and in school, soon to graduate. I was given 2 months off (which was an extension of the 6 weeks we typically could go without scheduling a shift). Though I had the benefit of time off, I had to return to work because two months without pay, and living off of my partner's income was not enough for my family. I returned to work to an on-call position that I was able to schedule around my partner's work schedule. This was a small solution to the overall issue of having consistent childcare. And while the flexibility was helpful, not having reliable childcare greatly limited my earning potential. In January of 2020, I quit to pursue writing full time and found out I was pregnant. Then COVID hit. Luckily my partner was able to work from home, giving us both the ability to be home with our eldest but our access to earning more was again impacted.

Not only did we not have access to adequate childcare, we didn't have access to childcare that was responsive to the needs of our eldest child, who needed an environment suited to helping her learn in a way that made her feel safe, empowered, and curious about learning. Having neurodivergent children means not many childcare providers can provide responsive care to what our children need. My eldest, now school aged, goes to school far from where we live because this school is able to provide a setting that works best for her. While this school setting is safe and beneficial to her learning style, the time and financial cost associated with her transportation can be a strain on a single income household with 5 dependents. Additionally, my youngest (who will be 3 this summer) requires similar additional support and may not be ready to join preschool this fall. We know that preschool is crucial for every child, but especially children born during the pandemic who may not have had as much time outside the home. Education on neurodivergence, creating environments that are safe for children to learn, and the necessary training for education providers who can meet the needs of children who have additional needs can only happen if childcare is prioritized and funded.

Families deserve relief and options and to grow and secure themselves financially and socially. Responsive, funded, and supported childcare is a necessity not only for

families, but for our communities. When families are left without options or opportunities we leave our communities without opportunities. I urge you to prioritize care in the upcoming budget, support families and providers so that our communities and children flourish and families are given relief.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Taylor Harvey