

April 26, 2023

To: Co-chairs Senator Steiner and Rep Sanchez, Members of the Committee
- Joint Committee on Ways & Means
From: Elizabeth Kirby, Sisters, Deschutes County

Re: Child Care Funding - **SUPPORT**

My name is Elizabeth Kirby and I live in Sisters.

I am writing to urge you to prioritize funding for childcare in the state budget because the childcare crisis that existed before the COVID-19 pandemic is still a state of emergency for parents, providers, and kids across Oregon. Care for children under the age of 3 is almost nonexistent in my area. Full time spots for kids ages 3-5 cost thousands per month and are hard to secure. It's vital to invest in our future for all families.

When I was pregnant with my daughter, my husband and I quickly realized that one of us would have to stop working to care for our child. Infant care wait lists were 9+ months long and cost over 100% of my monthly paycheck. I left the workforce with the hope of finding childcare when my child was out of the infant stage. Now my daughter is three and I'm still at home with her. I work part-time from home while caring for our daughter full time. Although she would benefit from being in a program with kids her own age, we still struggle with the affordability of her care. While Oregon funds programs like Preschool Promise, our income makes us ineligible for current programs funded by the State, yet we don't make enough to afford unsubsidized childcare. This leaves us, and many other families, in limbo. Additional investments that address affordability and access for middle-income families not only benefit our children; but also, benefit the economy and address issues in workforce retention.

In closing, I urge you again to prioritize funding for childcare initiatives that address accessibility and access to childcare for all families. The budget should advance our values and lay the foundation for a better future, your investment in childcare does that. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Kirby, parent & childcare advocate