

Submitter: Alejandra Soto

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 Alejandra Soto. I have run an in-home child care center in Woodburn OR.

I have been working in the area of early childhood education for 23 years.

Throughout that time I have faced many structural barriers that have made it difficult to keep going.

When I became a mother for the first time I found out how difficult it was to go back to work because of the lack of childcare. I did not have any viable options, so I stayed home and started my own childcare center. I soon fell in love with my job, and caring for others' children turned into my passion. I was able to care for my children and have some income.

We have a huge shortage of child care providers and it is difficult for us to serve more children that need a safe learning environment. There are a number of things that hold us back from being able to serve our community - for example, lack of good financial compensation, a lot of pressure but lack of support from the agencies that regulate homes and centers, lack of adequate staff, lack of financial and educational support for those who want to start, and the list goes on. My child care serves Spanish-speaking families, but there are even fewer Spanish-speaking people for me to hire. This has truly become a crisis, especially for families that need care that is in their home language and that is culturally appropriate for their children. I want to be able to pay my employees a professional wage that is in line with the level of responsibility and quality of the work they deliver to the children they work with.

Families need access to affordable quality child care so they can be financially secure and thrive. It's time for the Legislature to recognize that a government-funded childcare infrastructure would benefit not just working parents, but also the childcare providers who struggle to stay financially afloat while providing essential services that are the backbone of our economy.

Thank you.

Alejandra Soto

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