

Submitter: Raahi Reddy

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means

Measure: SB5506

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

My name is Raahi Reddy, I live in Portland, and I am a mother of two. Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective on our state budget with you today.

As a state, we face serious workforce challenges, and one of the root causes is the lack of child care infrastructure. Child care is the work that makes all other work possible. Without child care, we have no other workers. It is especially critical to women's ability to be in the workforce.

We often talk about investing in infrastructure. In shovel-ready jobs. In technology. In green energy. Child care is also an essential infrastructure. A significant portion of the construction sector workers are parents and we believe the future workforce in green infrastructure will mirror that statistic.

And without child care, we have fewer and fewer workers to build the infrastructure we need. Our federal Commerce Departments deemed childcare so crucial as to mandate it for employers in the semiconductor sector seeking their grants through the Chips Act. Without a child care workforce, we will not be able to take advantage of potential investments in infrastructure, such as the current CHIPS and Science Act, and more..

In order to build the child care workforce we need, we need to invest in it. The current system for funding child care – the free market – has failed. Child care requires an experienced and skilled labor force. Parents can not afford to pay enough for child care to sustain the actual cost of child care workers, buildings, overhead, etc. It simply doesn't pencil out. This is a huge market failure that the market alone can't fix--we need to state to intervene with an actual plan to invest in a strong child care system.

Please put child care at the top of your list as you make hard budgetary choices. With state investment in child care, we can build the child care workforce that we need. Remember, child care is the work that makes all other work possible.

Thank you,

Raahi Reddy