

Submitter: Ellen Rauenzahn

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Higher Education and Workforce Development

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3011

Representative Hudson,

I am writing to express my support for HB3011. When I was deciding what path to pursue for my degree, I decided against entering the field of early childhood education (ECE) because I knew I would be signing up for a life of being constantly overworked due to the severe workforce crisis in the field of ECE. I had experienced the stretched-thin reality of working in early care through my year of substitute teaching in a number of local centers, and I saw how the full time teachers functioned as a skeleton crew. The other problem was that I was making more in my other job as an entry level disability caregiver than these teachers were making with advanced degrees. I just couldn't see how to make it work.

I am passionate about child development and continue to believe that early teachers are essential to the wellbeing of our entire society, given how many children spend their parents' work week in full-time care. Providing quality early care has ripple effects for decades to come. Children who are nourished through informed practice will grow up to contribute more to the economy, commit fewer crimes, have more stable relationships, and generally thrive more than those who are simply warehoused in low quality programs during the work week so that their parents can put food on the table.

I am currently pregnant with my first child and so I also address you as a stakeholder in this issue. It is very likely that at some point I will have to go back to work before my child enters elementary school. Our economy simply does not allow for single income households by and large. If and when I am forced to put my child in an ECE program, that decision (never an easy one) will be made more bearable if I can be confident that my child's teacher will be my teammate in supporting my child's academic learning, social development, physical skills, and curiosity about the world. As a parent to be, I am benefiting from decades of research around child development as I read parenting books to prepare for my little one. I would like to know that the professionals to whom I entrust my little one are also up to date on the best science of child development and early education.

Significant investment will be needed to combat this workforce crisis and develop a new generation of quality ECE professionals. Efforts to bring students into the field will have to overcome the low wages, the lack of respect (but you're not a REAL teacher, right?), and the generally poor understanding in our society of how important

it really is to provide quality care and education for our youngest Oregonians. It's a complex problem and will need to be addressed from many angles. HB3011 would begin to address the education angle, and our community colleges and state universities are well equipped to promptly maximize their potential impact with this funding.

Thank you for your consideration and I hope you will support HB3011 for the sake of my child and all our children.

Ellen Rauenzahn