

Submitter: Kayla Huitt

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Higher Education and Workforce Development

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3008

To: House Committee on Higher Education and Workforce Development

From: Child Care for Oregon

Date: February 11, 2025

RE: In Support of HB 3008

Chair Hudson, Vice-Chairs Fragala and Harbick, members of the committee:

As a childcare worker of five years, I am writing to express my strong support for HB 3008. I live in Portland, OR, and have worked as a preschool teacher at Sweet Day Community School for my entire career. I care deeply about the children I have served and the community that has supported and shaped me as an educator. This legislation has the potential to significantly improve the lives of childcare workers like myself, as well as the businesses and families we support.

Childcare workers face significant challenges in this industry. Low wages make it difficult to make ends meet, and the lack of benefits forces many of us to reconsider our careers. It is no surprise that there is a workforce shortage. Without livable wages and essential benefits, sustaining a career in childcare is nearly impossible. My husband and I both worked at Sweet Day until he left to pursue another career path because our combined salaries could not support homeownership or starting a family. Now, I find myself in the same difficult position, pursuing another career path. As much as I love being an early childhood educator, financial insecurity and the lack of benefits have left me with few options for a sustainable future.

HB 3008 addresses these critical issues by investing in the Child Care Recognition Payment Program and expanding childcare apprenticeships across the state. These initiatives provide financial stability during economic uncertainty, create accessible career pathways without student debt, and help childcare businesses retain skilled workers. As a recipient of the Child Care Recognition Payment, I know firsthand the impact of this support. It helped me navigate a period of unemployment and fund my continuing education. Unfortunately, nearly half of my colleagues decided to leave childcare or are considering leaving due to financial hardships and the instability caused by high turnover rates. Staffing shortages, such as classrooms with only two teachers for 16 children, create immense stress. Expanding apprenticeship programs would provide essential training and preparation for new educators, ensuring they feel confident and capable in their roles.

HB 3008 aligns with my core values of promoting quality, affordability, and accessibility in childcare. None of these are possible without a strong, well-supported workforce. By investing in childcare professionals, we can ensure stability for workers and guarantee high-quality care for Oregon's children.

I urge you to support HB 3008. This legislation is vital to strengthening the childcare workforce, ensuring educators can continue their essential work without financial strain, and securing a brighter future for young Oregonians.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Sincerely,  
Kayla Huitt