

To: House Committee on Early Childhood & Human Services
From: Child Care for Oregon
Date: February 20, 2025
RE: In Support of HB 2452

Chair Hartman, Vice-Chairs Nguyen and Scharf, members of the committee:

Dear Members of the Committee,

My name is Carolyn Pasquarella, and I am a mother in Portland. I am here today to express my strong support for House Bill 2452.

As a mother of two Autistic children, I have always struggled to find childcare that is both accepting and qualified to care for them. The reality is, there are simply not enough childcare programs for any family—but when your child has a disability, the options are even more limited. Too often, when a childcare center does accept a disabled child, they quickly realize they don't have the skills or resources to support them and push for the child to leave. This creates enormous stress for parents and disrupts the child's routine, which can be especially harmful for neurodivergent kids.

Many parents of disabled children are forced to quit their jobs—if they are even able to work in the first place. This lack of accessible childcare affects us economically and socially. Schools are required to accept children with disabilities, but childcare facilities are not held to the same standard. As a result, children with disabilities—who already face challenges in making and keeping friends—are further isolated when after-school care and activities are unavailable to them. This social exclusion can lead to loneliness and depression. How can we create a truly inclusive society if we fail to start in early childhood? The message this sends is clear: there is no place for my child unless the law demands it.

If more inclusive after-school programs existed for both disabled and non-disabled children, it would benefit everyone. Neurotypical children would have opportunities to form friendships in a low-pressure environment, and inclusion would happen naturally. I urge you to prioritize and invest in childcare to make responsive, affordable, and inclusive care accessible to families like mine.

That's why I strongly support expanding Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR) services. CCRRs play a crucial role in helping families like mine find quality childcare by connecting parents with vetted providers, offering guidance on evaluating options, and helping us navigate an already complex system.

House Bill 2452 would provide grants to CCRRs, allowing them to expand services and better support families. This bill will help ensure that:

- More families have access to quality childcare
- Parents receive the guidance they need to make informed decisions about their children's care
- Childcare providers are held to high standards, creating a safer, more inclusive environment for all children

If HB 2452 passes, my family and many others will directly benefit. Childcare is not a luxury—it is a fundamental right and a basic need. It enables parents to work, strengthens our economy, and ensures that children can grow, learn, and build relationships with their peers. Without it, families are stuck, careers are stunted, and children miss out on essential social experiences. Expanding access to childcare will make my family and my community stronger, safer, and happier.

I urge you to support House Bill 2452. This legislation has the potential to create lasting change for Oregon families like mine. By investing in CCRRs, we can ensure that all parents have access to the resources they need to give their children a strong foundation for success.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Sincerely,
Carolyn Pasquarella