

Testimony Template (Parents): HB2452 CCRR

Submission Link:

Submission Deadline:



Child Care That Works. For Every Family.

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:

My name is Laura Labarre and I am a parent of two young Oregonians, ages 6 and 4 I also am a policy professional with over 14 years in the education and child care space in my earlier career. As a constituent and Portland-area resident, I am here today to express my strong support for House Bill 2452.

As a parent who has had the privilege of high education attainment and connections in the early childhood space through my professional work, I've been shocked by my own struggle to procure the child care my family depends on. I can only imagine the insurmountable hurdles for someone who does not have my background and connections. In 2022, I was forced to take a leave from my job when I lost all child care due to behavioral issues with my then-three year old. I could not find a nanny, in-home preschool or center that had space at all, let alone space for a child with unique needs. I spent hours and hundreds (not a typo) of dollars I didn't have as a person who wasn't working putting my two young children on wait lists all over Portland. I tried referrals, using 211, tapping connections through my colleagues in the early childhood space (including at EI/ECSE), and nothing emerged. It was months before I finally connected with a nanny who could address our needs, but I only had the money to hire her part-time (4 days/week).

By late 2022, the cost of a nanny got burdensome, I *had* to find preschool or risk losing child care altogether--or my job. Finally after pouring countless hours I did not have into pursuing more wait lists and child care options, I was able to enroll my children in a preschool--2 days per week. It would be another year and a half before even one of my children could attend full time. I wish I could get back the hundreds of dollars wasted on fruitless wait lists and put it toward anything else, my children's 529s, for example. I wish I could have back those hours of parsing through the flailing system, precious time I could have otherwise worked or better yet,

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spent with my children. The stress of this has come to degrade my well being and my health. I need not point out that this stress falls unduly to women in Oregon, contributing to pay gaps and gaps in health outcomes.

Because of these delays and obstacles, I remained in a job where I experienced discrimination as a parent (which included snide remarks from the leader of the organization and contributed to a lack of pay raises and promotions). My pay and my professional growth were stuck as a result of inadequate quality child care. It wasn't until my eldest received a full time slot at our (beloved) preschool that I finally had the time and resources to improve my employment. I then had to delay once again because I was in "PTO-debt" to my employer. That is to say I had gone negative on my Paid Time Off (PTO) and if I resigned, I would potentially owe *them* money. To cover gaps in child care, I had blasted through all of my sick and vacation time and then some. To this day, I have a phobia of using my sick time when I'm ill for fear I'll need it for my children and could end up in "PTO-debt" again to my employer. I have worked through illnesses like RSV, ear infections, bronchitis, and more. None of this has done me any favors physically or mentally.

That's why I believe that child care resource and referral directors (CCRRs) are essential in helping families like mine access quality child care. CCRRs provide a vital service by connecting parents with vetted providers, offering guidance and coaching on evaluating care options, and supporting us in navigating the complex child care system.

House Bill 2452 will enable CCRRs to expand their services and better support families like mine. By providing grants to CCRRs, this bill will help ensure that:

- More families have access to quality child care
- Parents receive the support they need to make informed decisions about their children's care
- Child care providers are held to high standards, ensuring a safe and nurturing environment for our children

Knowing there are better resources available as I continue to negotiate child care for my 4 year-old and summer/after school care for my 6-year-old would make an immense difference to my family and others in Oregon.

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I urge you to support House Bill 2452. By investing in CCRRs, we can ensure that all parents have access to the resources they need to provide their children with a strong foundation.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Sincerely,
Laura Labarre