

Submitter: Andrea Metheney
On Behalf Of: Candice Vickers Family Forward Oregon
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee
On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5514

DATE: March 6, 2025
SB 5514: In support

Co-Chair Sollman, Co-Chair Ruiz and members of the the Committee,

My name is Candice Vickers, I'm a mother of two, a fourth generation Portland resident and the Executive Director of Family Forward Oregon.

As Oregonians struggle with the high cost of housing, food and healthcare, many families are unable to find adequate and affordable child care to even go to work. We must invest in child care so that caregivers and parents can participate in the labor market, drive local economies and provide for their families and loved ones.

I urge the Oregon Legislature to fulfill their promise to working families and students seeking affordable child care by investing \$500M in the Employee Related Day Care (ERDC) program

The ERDC program is a lifeline for more than 16,000 families—it keeps parents working or continuing their education and ensures kids receive the quality care they deserve. However, currently ERDC is only serving about 12% of eligible families.

The Oregon Legislature has made a commitment to families in need of affordable child care. In recent years, the Oregon Legislature expanded the eligibility for ERDC and then failed to adequately support the program in the subsequent legislative sessions. This has created a waitlist of over 9,700 families, while nearly 4,000 families are unable to find an eligible childcare provider. Without more funding, thousands of families eligible for assistance will be denied access to these critical subsidies.

The Oregon Legislature has historically underfunded the child care system, which is an unfortunate trend in the United States. Our nation invests fewer public dollars in early childhood education and child care relative to gross domestic product (GDP) than almost all other developed countries — ranking 35th out of 37 countries.

Child care is the workforce behind our workforce. It is an essential industry and we must fund child care just like libraries, schools, and other public services.

I urge Oregon Legislators to invest in child care, and invest in Oregon's economy and future.

Candice Vickers

Executive Director
Family Forward Oregon