

Submitter: Andrea Metheney
On Behalf Of: Dina Lopez
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee
On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5514

Date: 3/5/25
SB 5514 In support

My name is Dina, and I am a childcare provider here in Oregon. We are all here today because we know and believe our lawmakers can be doing more to support the families in Oregon, with children aged 0-5.

The care I provide for families is the start of their children's educational journeys. It's hard work to take care of children at this important developmental stage. Maintaining my credentials is constant education for me and other childcare providers. We have to pay for all of that education out of our own pockets. The same way we pay to provide meals, toys, and safe learning environments for children. We are professionals, who truly care about providing care.

But we are operating in an imperfect system that not only costs us personally, but costs us as a community and state. When providers can't afford to feed themselves or their families and families can't afford childcare we see those impacts for years down the road. Families and providers suffer emotionally, financially, and feel like there isn't a lot of hope.

I believe the people in this room and the lawmakers listening today know we can do more, and are committed to seeing strong improvements made. I know a lot of providers and lawmakers may not know where to start to address the childcare crisis in our state. I think one of the best places we can look at making much needed improvements is fully funding our ERDC program—this includes the 25% of families that have ERDC but can't find a provider, and the more than 10,000 families on the waitlist hoping to be able to access childcare.

My rates are based on the ERDC rates, and families who can't access it because of long waitlists also can't afford to pay out of pocket for those rates. I shouldn't feel guilty being paid for the work I do, but I know it's hard for families to give me that money. I am the only care provider they can rely on to allow them to go to work. They need me to be able to support their families and I need them to support my own.

It is hard for providers like me to fill their ERDC spots, families can't find us and there is no support to connect them to us. This used to happen with the Childcare

Resource and Referral agencies, but it doesn't happen anymore. Instead families are on their own to find childcare that fits their needs, and providers are relying more and more on word of mouth to fill our available spots. Nobody in this system is thriving. Bills like House Bill 3008 would support the infrastructure of our child care system and provide necessary support to providers, help recruit and train new childcare providers, and provide us with necessary benefits like healthcare coverage that we desperately need. Or House Bill 2452 that would give expanded referral access to the CCR&R agencies to connect families and providers to each other and help our families thrive.

I believe that we can do and accomplish great things when lawmakers work together with the childcare providers in this state to create and fund the programs that would stabilize our childcare workforce and access. I am here for all of the mothers, fathers, and families I provide care for. I'm here for the providers like me who work hard to provide safe, quality, and affordable care. I believe in the power of our voices and our experiences to shape the future we deserve.

Thank you,
Dina Lopez