



Oregon moms and caregivers fighting for gender, economic, and racial justice.

To: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Education
From: Family Forward Oregon
Date: March 7, 2025
RE: In Support of SB 5514

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

My name is Marchel Marcos, I'm a mother of two, resident of Hillsboro, and Political Director for Family Forward.

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 an additional \$500M in the Employee Related Day Care (ERDC) program. This meaningful and necessary investment would allow Oregon to continue to serve the families currently enrolled in ERDC and end the waitlist for the 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 Governor's recommended budget doesn't take the 4,000 families that are approved for ERDC but not actively using their benefits because they aren't connected to a child care provider.

Currently it's a difficult time for parents and child care providers to be present in the Capitol today but you'll see testimony from parents and providers across the state who support and rely on the ERDC program. Child care is one of the top expenses in a household and at a time where working families and student parents cannot afford the current cost of living, now is not the time to punt the cost of care back onto the backs of working families. These are most impacted communities: minimum wage workers, families in the foster care system, and survivors of domestic violence.

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. Without more funding, thousands of families eligible for assistance will be denied access to these critical subsidies.

Furthermore, a well-funded ERDC program is vital to the stabilization and success of the entire child care ecosystem—for ERDC and private-pay families alike. The ERDC program is the largest single buyer of child care in Oregon, accounting for about 30% of the overall marketplace. Without robust investment, we risk not only losing more of our currently inadequate capacity but also undermining the progress we've made in expanding the child care workforce through recent legislative investments of over \$150 million.

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.



Marchel Marcos
Political Director
Family Forward Oregon

