

To: Ways and Means Committee

From: Heather Gonzalez Padilla

Date: 4/25/2025

Co-Chair Tawna D. Sanchez, Co-Chair Kate Lieber and members of the the Committee,

My name is Heather Gonzalez Padilla and I am a parent, community member, advocate, representative of an organization].

I'm writing to urge lawmakers to invest in critical child care initiatives that will have a profound impact on families, our workforce, and local economies. Specifically, I strongly support allocating:

- \$250 million additional budget allocation to the Department of Early Learning and Care to eliminate the waitlist for Employment Related Day Care (ERDC) and connect 4,000 approved families with child care providers.
- \$14 million for HB 2452 to fund Child Care Resource and Referral Directors, ensuring families can find suitable care options.
- \$16 million for HB 3008 to continue recognition bonus payments to child care providers and invest in workforce apprenticeship programs.

These investments are crucial to stabilizing the entire child care ecosystem and addressing long-standing issues plaguing our system. By doing so, we can ensure that all families, regardless of income level, have access to affordable and high-quality child care options that meet their unique needs.

I have been on the wait list for EDRC for over a year. We can't pay for a babysitter until I work and I can't work until we have a babysitter. So we are stuck until our youngest starts school so I can work. Every where we have gone wants us to pay more than I would make working. We have our child in headstart and it has helped, but the limited hours still makes

it hard for me to find a job. Headstart is a huge help and it needs to stay part of our community.

I urge you to allocate these critical funds to support child care infrastructure and ensure that all families have access to quality child care. This investment will have a lasting impact on our communities and our state's future.

Thank you,

Heather Gonzalez Padilla