

To: Ways and Means Committee

From: Dana Westbrook

Date: 4/25/2025

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

My name is Dana Westbrook, 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.

Without the availability of ERDC to my family, we would not have been able to continue working and going to school to finish a degree. ERDC has allowed us to continue to better our lives by pursuing careers and education, and also the lives of our children by having quality child care. Brains grow the most in the first 5 years, so when Oregon invests in early childhood it is also investing in our future as a 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,

Dana Westbrook

