

To: Ways and Means Committee

From: Kendra Votava

Date: 4/25/2025

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

My name is Kendra Votava, 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.

As a provider in Oregon who accepts ERDC, it is difficult to have a system that is challenging to navigate. I can refer families who need care, but if they aren't already on the list they may wait up to 18 months to be accepted. At that point, their child may have aged out of services, and the family will have missed out on early education benefits such as early identification of disabilities, social skill development, early math and literacy support, as well as additional supports to families like food security, transportation, and medical care. Adding funds to support the ERDC program to reach all the children that are on the waitlist ensures that the most vulnerable children from low-income families have access to high quality education.

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,

Kendra Votava