Member Affairs #5

Subject: Universal Dependent/Childcare for Working Families in Oregon

Authored by: Theodora Ko Thompson, Kelly Kalkofen, Haley Milam, supported by *Civil and Human Rights Committee*

Submitted by: *Oregon Employment Department L471*

WHEREAS, , ***Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world"*** ~ Harriet Tubman, and

WHEREAS, ***"I raise my voice not so I can shout, but so that those without a voice can be heard…we cannot succeed when half of us are held back."*** ~ Malala Yousafzai, and

WHEREAS, Universal childcare is vital for working families. The Mother's Pension in 1900s-1930s was "*designed for mothers to stay at home to care for their children, failing to recognize the needs of working mothers"* and childcare policies failures over the last 125 years have contributed to make childcare inaccessible and inadequate for many families with low incomes. Systemic racism and subjective criteria in childcare policies impacted families of color, denied pensions for certain groups especially for Black women, such discriminatory practices impacted families in need and parent workforce participation including their access and opportunity to pursue employment and/or educational aspirations for economic stability and security; and

WHEREAS, the "parent" in families is dependent/child's primary caregiver, be they the parent, grandparent, relative, foster parent, etc. Family structures are diverse, from the traditional nuclear model (two parents, biological children) to the fluid and varied that include single-parenting, blended families, cohabitation, and (multi-generational households). Family structures and responsibilities emphasize interdependence and shared responsibility rather than strict, linear life cycles, and

WHEREAS, the childcare workforce in the United States is predominantly female; historically, traditionally and culturally the burden of care needs disproportionately falls on women impacting women's health, well-being, and their participation in the labor force viz. mothers miss work or reduce work hours more often than fathers, less free time (20% less) and spend more time on dependent/childcare and household work (2.1x; 3.4x for Latine women). The unequal division of labor and gender gap in free time leaves mothers particularly vulnerable to burnout, mental health problems and greater vulnerability to dangerous heat waves, wildfires, and floods driven impacts of climate change, and

WHEREAS, the Covid-19 pandemic made gender disparity worse with closures in the childcare industry, corresponding limited language services, and inaccessible services due to transportation or internet connectivity barriers and exacerbated the increase in the cost of childcare; correspondingly, return-to-office policies pushed many women out of

the workforce. The fragmented system of dependent/childcare places an undue high burden for families and child development by creating unequal access, immense stress and instability in the workforce. Absent a universal or robust care system or infrastructure mothers especially are prevented from achieving their full potential and participation in the labor force, and

WHEREAS, costs for dependent/childcare are rising faster than inflation, many states in America the childcare cost is as much as a year of college. Families face significant financial and resource hurdles in the instability in dependent/childcare support as they struggle living from paycheck to paycheck, some working two or more jobs to make ends meet. In Oregon, the average cost of childcare for a two-child household in Oregon is $32,760 and families need to earn up 328% more to meet the government's 7% childcare affordability benchmark. American Indian and Black families are furthest from the income needed to comfortably afford childcare, and

WHEREAS, more than half of SEIU 503 workforce representations is in the care industry. Women who make up a large proportion of union members have been closing the gender gap in union membership. Women's leadership and gender inclusive activism is critical and important to families, especially for parents with young families to advance on critical issues in unions' agendas on paycheck fairness and access to affordable dependent/childcare and early education. Women's engagement, involvement and activism strengthen unions by enabling them to be more inclusive of the needs and priorities of all their members, and

WHEREAS, Universal Childcare is critical for working families and in society. The **Universal Childcare and Early Education Act** (HR 2886) and **Child Care for Every Community Care Act** (HR 4418) are promising legislative proposals aimed at creating a national, universal childcare and pre-school program in an early learning system. These proposals aim to make childcare free or affordable at $10/day for low-income families and cap costs at 7% of income for others, while raising wages for workers. Similar proposals have been initiated in New Mexico, Vermont, Connecticut, Texas, Iowa, Arizona and New York focused on economic stability and workforce participation., and

WHEREAS, SEIU 503 is recognized as the most influential union in Oregon in care and public services to improve workers' lives and fight for economic, racial, and environmental justice. Member active participation, engagement and involvement in their union remains vital to develop highly trained and motivated leaders at every level and that in unity and solidarity we bring our purple passion and commitment in the #UnionsforAll labor movement, and

WHEREAS, SEIU 503's Civil and Human Rights Committee, Women's Council and Caucuses have been champions in our strive for equality, equity and inclusion to be an anti-racist union. We take pride in our message **WE WELCOME ALL** and as a member-led union working toward the vision of a just society at our 2008 SEIU International Union, ***Justice For All…Pass It On*** matters to build solidarity with our

allies for economic, environmental and social justice for our members and working families where they work, live and play in their communities, and

WHEREAS THEREFORE, ***Nothing About Us, Without Us. Para Todos Todo, Nada Para Nosotros***. Inclusive decision-making is critical to value perspectives from members with dependents who will most be impacted and feel valued for their challenges to be engaged in robust dialogue with questions and clarifying dialogue. Inclusive decision processes create and foster a culture that strengthens trust, collaboration, resilience when people feel respected, informed and invested in the shared commitment toward strategic goals, and

BE IT RESOLVED, Universal Dependent/childcare is vital for economic mobility and security for working families, and to foster and retain a more inclusive and equitable public sector and care workforce in Oregon. SEIU Local 503, OPEU General Council shall endorse SEIU 503's commitment to the formulation and establishment of a gender and language inclusive Dependent Care standing taskforce, working group or committee as a critical first step to review and ensure existing policies, and shall advocate toward any federal and/or state legislative initiative for affordable, accessible dependent/childcare and early learning system and that there is the inclusion of a provision for the union's promotion of municipal universal Childcare/Headstart program as a workforce necessity so that working parents are not compelled to choose between their careers and securing care for their dependent/child(ren). The taskforce/committee/workgroup will include at least one member from each of the following: CHRC, Women Council and each Caucus, as well as at least one SEIU 503 staff, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this workgroup will conduct research and a survey across all sectors supported by SEIU 503 to determine what policies, provisions and resources might still be needed, and will produce and provide regular reports to the Civil and Human Rights Committee, the Board and appropriate parties in the union, as well as make appropriate recommendations for bargaining committees and other bodies of the union, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, SEIU Local 503, OPEU shall call upon policymakers, state agencies, and educational institutions in Oregon to advocate and prioritize Universal Dependent/Childcare costs and early education as part of a comprehensive workforce investment and retention strategy; that we form connections and collaborate with allies and unions who are already working to address the dependent/childcare costs in childcare deserts, particularly for historically marginalized and underrepresented communities, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, when we **Rise, Resist, Repeat** we continue as a union that dares to **Dream Big, Build Power**, **Building Power** to **Create Change**, and when we are **In It Together**, **Together, We Will Be Making History** for our members, working families and society.

IMPACT STATEMENTS

Financial: No fiscal impact

Equity: This resolution would have a positive impact. It addresses and attempts to alleviate the burden of care disproportionately placed on women and marginalized communities, as well as mitigates financial hardship and prevalence of career sacrifice resulting from familial care needs. SEIU 503 has a proven history of success in moving legislative agendas forward and could leverage their power and influence to prioritize dependent and child care initiatives.

Legal: No legal impact

Political: This resolution would direct our union to support and advocate for universal child care/dependent care and early education at the local, state, and federal levels. Any federal advocacy will need to be led and facilitated by the International Union. There are existing organizations and coalitions in Oregon who lead this work, and while SEIU Local 503 works alongside them and supports this work, the union is not currently an active participant. The Political Department may need to reassign staff or add additional staff capacity in order to implement this resolution.