

December 2, 2024


Kim Strebin
28914 Minnehaha Rd.
Hermiston, OR 97838

To Whom it may concern:

I know for myself, as well as for many of the UEC new hires, (based on discussions had with them during the recruiting and onboarding process) it's very difficult to find daycare options that will accommodate our work schedule. Many daycares aren't open for the 11+ hours that we need childcare for based on our 4x10's work schedule and most aren't open prior to 7:00am or past 6:00pm. I was left scrambling, messaging anyone I knew that had kids to see if their babysitter had any openings. After realizing majority of the local childcare providers didn't have any openings, and having to rely on family to help me out until I could find something, I was extremely lucky to find a provider who offers care out of her home here in Hermiston and was willing to have my kids for the hours needed at an affordable rate. It was also very important for my family to find a flexible provider who was willing to allow drop-in's at a drop in rate (pay by the day) rather than pay per month regardless of how many days are needed as my kids only go to school 4 days a week and my parents are kind enough to help out with them at least one day per week, leaving them only needing care for 3 days per week. Of course, it was also important that the environment be safe and educational, food be provided, the care be reliable and that my kids enjoy the provider as well as the other kids. We were extremely lucky to check majority of those boxes with our current provider but realize how rare that is and hope that other families still searching can find what they need.

I also know that the lack of early education options is a struggle for young families in the community. If there was a daycare that provided a stimulating/learning environment, that would be such an important addition to the community where majority of the pre-school options are either full, expensive, only provide two hours of learning on two or three days per week, or all of the above. Even if you can get your kid in to one of the local pre-schools, the ability to get them to and from the two-hour school time during work hours (typically 10am-12pm- Monday & Wednesday or Tuesday and Thursday) is difficult enough, then you also have to pay a daycare provider to watch them for the remaining hours of your workday. This is not only a hard schedule to juggle, but very expensive. The same is true for school aged kids and the lack of educational/learning options during the summertime. There are a few summer camp options (Yay Hydromania) but most are only for specific age groups, and have limited space. Again, majority are costly and only for a couple hours during our workday and getting kids to and from is difficult. Given that kids typically get more than two months off during the summer it would be beneficial if they could spend that time in a learning environment continuing to develop their cognitive, social, emotional, and communication skills. It's important that we invest in the future and what better way to do that than to provide safe, affordable, reliable, and educational childcare to our youth.

Thank you,


Kim Strebin
(541) 561-1623

December 2, 2024

Kimberly Rill
15 Smith Drive
P.O. Box 442
Echo, OR 97826

Subject: Childcare Desert in Eastern Oregon

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to draw attention to an urgent issue affecting the well-being and economic vitality of our communities in eastern Oregon: the critical shortage of accessible, affordable childcare. Eastern Oregon, including the communities of Hermiston, Stanfield and Echo, in my experience, have existed as a "childcare desert," where the demand for childcare far outweighs the available supply. This disparity places a heavy burden on working families and threatens the continued growth of our local economy.

In Hermiston alone, where population growth has surged in recent years, parents are struggling to find adequate childcare options. Similarly, Stanfield and Echo, with their close-knit communities, face similar challenges, my family included. The lack of facilities not only limits opportunities for children to thrive in enriching environments but also creates significant barriers for parents, particularly women, trying to rejoin or remain in the workforce.

We found out that we would be starting a family in mid-2022. Before announcing the pregnancy to extended family and friends, I contacted childcare facilities to get on waiting lists for care. This would prove to be nearly 10 months before the care was needed, including gestation and maternity leave time.

We remained on four waiting lists during this time, all located in Hermiston, and received no calls for openings through February 2023. Before returning to work, I became desperate for childcare and contacted every person in my phone contacts that had a child in the last five years, asking for connections for childcare. This method proved to be successful, finding a working-from-home mother that left the traditional workforce to stay home with her child and provide care to additional families in Echo.

However, this situation remains active for me, as my provider is expanding her family again, and will take a well-deserved maternity leave, leaving my family without care later this year.

Addressing this issue requires collaboration between local leaders, businesses, and families. Solutions like expanding funding for childcare facilities, incentivizing providers to serve rural areas, and offering employer-supported childcare programs could pave the way toward relief. I appreciate the work that Umatilla Electric Cooperative's leadership is doing to support their employees and the region's workforce. As a community, we must prioritize efforts to ensure every family has access to the childcare they need to thrive.

Sincerely,



Kimberly Rill
A local working mother
(541) 377-0754

Jodie Thomas
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Hermiston, OR 97838
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(541) 314-3931

December 3, 2024

To Whom It May Concern,

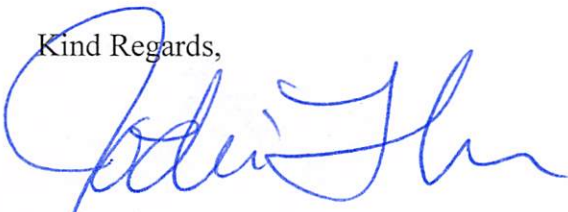
I am writing to highlight the growing need for accessible and affordable childcare facilities in Hermiston and rural Oregon. As a mother of two young children, ages 6 and 4, I have personally experienced the challenges families face in finding reliable childcare in our small community.

Childcare is a significant burden for working parents. Many families in our area struggle to secure safe and dependable options—even those with personal connections. For newcomers to the region, the lack of childcare facilities can deter them from relocating their families or accepting job opportunities here. This issue not only limits families' ability to fully participate in the workforce but also impacts the well-being and early development of our children.

Expanding childcare facilities in Hermiston would bring much-needed relief to families like mine and serve as an essential investment in the future of our community. I urge the city to prioritize this issue, explore partnerships with local organizations, and consider funding initiatives to develop new childcare centers or expand existing ones.

Thank you for your attention to this pressing matter. I am hopeful that, together, we can create a more supportive environment for families in Hermiston.

Kind Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jodie Thomas', is written over the 'Kind Regards,' text.

Jodie Thomas

Hermiston Resident and Mother