

How we respond to the COVID-19 crisis matters.

Mothers and caregivers—especially those who identify as Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC)—have been disproportionately impacted by the mishandling of our response thus far. We now have the opportunity to reflect on past policy decisions that put our communities in greater jeopardy, and create a different path and a more equitable state going forward. That's why, in 2021, Family Forward Oregon will be focused on policies that:



Rebuild our child care system & supply

The need for sustained public investment has never been more clearer. We can start by protecting our current investments in the Employment Related Day Care program (ERDC) and spend these funds in ways that better serve eligible children and the providers that care for them. Our policy bill reforms ERDC into a child care assistance program that better serves low income and BIPOC families, as well as provides fair compensation for the child care business owners and educators—predominantly women and BIPOC women—who perform this critical work.



Ensure equity in Paid Family & Medical Leave (PFML) implementation

Public health officials recommend that people who are sick or exposed to COVID-19 should stay home; school buildings have been shuttered; and workplaces have been closed or transitioned to telework. Benefits such as sick time and family and medical leave are essential for employees to follow these guidelines and protect their ability to pay rent and keep food on the table. While the Oregon Paid Family and Medical Leave Insurance program will not be fully up and running until 2023, we are more assured than ever that implementing this program equitably is essential to the health and well-being of all Oregonians



Expand access to mental health care for BIPOC communities

Our goal is to increase access to BIPOC providers and culturally competent mental health care for BIPOC mothers, children, caregivers, immigrants, and refugees across the state. People who identify as Black, Indigenous, and/or people of color often struggle to find care that is offered by BIPOC providers and/or is culturally competent. Many others systematically lack access to health insurance and care because of their documentation status. And even when someone has health insurance and/or qualifies for Medicaid they often lack sufficient mental health care coverage. Often, they must also overcome the stigma associated with seeking mental health care and the lack of trust in the system.



Influence federal policy around caregiving & COVID-19 support

We will continue to work with federal and other state partners to move forward on child care, paid family and medical leave, and paid sick days on a national level. We will also work to coordinate support for, and organizing around, continued federal supports for families during COVID-19.

Meet Family Forward's Team



Family Forward's Internal Policy Team



Courtney Helstein
Political Director
courtney@familyforward.org
(503) 915-2948



Lisa Kwon
Policy Manager
lisakwon@familyforward.org
(971) 295-9463



Kaitlin Gaffney
Federal Policy Manager
kaitlin@familyforward.org
(575) 313-5080

Child care, paid family and medical leave, pay equity, Fair Shot agenda, all other issues.

Paid family & medical leave, reproductive and mental health care, criminal justice reform.

Federal policy related to child care, paid leave, sick days & COVID-19 supports.

External Government Affairs Team



Chloe Becker
Strategies 360
chloeb@strategies360.com
(971) 506-7162

Policy such as paid family and medical leave and child care.



Phillip Kennedy-Wong
Strategies 360
phillipk@strategies360.com
(971) 645-2601

Budget issues related to child care and paid family and medical leave.

Our Movement

We are mamas and caregivers building a movement across race, class, gender, sexuality, age, ability, and immigration status to fight for economic and reproductive justice for mamas and other caregivers.

We advocate for bold policies that value caregiving—the work that makes all other work possible.

History has shown that without our direct advocacy, people in power won't change the systems or create the laws that will level the playing field for women across the income spectrum, for women of color, or for other caregivers—so we are demanding change.

Learn more & join the movement:
familyforwardoregon.org

