



Dear Co-chairs Monroe and Smith Warner and members of the committee,

Thank you, for the opportunity to provide testimony on the Early Learning Division budget in SB 5516. My name is Eva Rippeteau and I am a political coordinator for AFSCME Council 75. We represent AFSCME Locals 132 - Child Care Providers Together, Local 2619 – Southern Oregon Child and Family Council (Head Start), Local 3536 – Community Services Consortium that operates the Head Start in Lincoln City and Local 1309 - the non-teaching staff at the Oregon Child Development Coalition in Klamath County. AFSCME also represents many who work in health (public, behavioral and physical), human services, public safety and public defense. I mention these other areas because I know and my members know that while we look at these budgets by program areas and departments, that cuts to any, especially those that help children and families succeed, have impacts across all budgets.

There are so many important programs in the Early Learning Division budget and Acting Director Mandell did a good job of laying out the programs and how they help children and families and the challenges that we face as a state. Of course, the primary issue at hand is paying for the services. There are several that I want to highlight today: funding to help providers pay for the Central Background Registry checks and fingerprinting, Preschool Promise, Head Start/Oregon Pre-K and Early Head Start wages, and the intersection of the ELD and DHS in Employment Related Day Care.

For years, the Central Background Registry (CBR) application fee was \$3. This was subsidized to keep it affordable for providers. For Family Child Care – licensed in-home providers- any person living in their home must have a background check as well as any staff they have. The very affordable \$3 rate allowed for providers to have other family and friends who frequently stop by their house added to the CBR. Unfortunately, the funding for the subsidized rate has gone at the same time that the new federal requirements for fingerprinting have been added. Even at the current subsidized rate of \$35 for the CBR and \$12.50 for the fingerprinting this significant increase is cost prohibitive. Once that subsidy goes away, the CBR application will be \$75 with the additional \$12.50 for the fingerprinting. For family child care, this may mean friends and family will no longer be able to stop by during child caring hours. For providers who encourage parent involvement and volunteerism, the nearly \$90 background check is a huge barrier. For centers, the costs are a disincentive to people who may apply to be substitutes. Finding funding to continue to keep these crucial checks is important.



In its first year, Preschool Promise has provided more opportunities for children to access quality early learning experiences, additionally it propelled the critical conversation around wages for our early learning providers in the state. The Early Learning Division and awarded Early Learning Hubs did a tremendous job in finding providers that truly provided for the intended “mixed delivery” by including family child care, Head Starts and other settings. It has certainly been a learning experience for all involved. I am optimistic about the program, and the continued conversation around access to early learning experiences and raising wages of our early educators and child care providers. It is especially exciting given the proposed changes in HB 2013, to make clear that quality isn’t necessarily tied to a formal education. My concern is that funding Preschool Promise at Current Service Level and not adding to the program will result in fewer children being served and provider wages staying low.

Like all in early education and child care, our Oregon Prekindergarten/Head Start and Early Head Start teachers and staff are tremendously underpaid. I know that the budget ask this session has focused on lead teacher salaries. Raising salaries of lead teachers is important as there is high turnover in our Head Starts. As educational standards have increased for lead teachers in Head Start, their salaries have not kept up. However, wages for other staff have also been well below the increasing cost of living causing high turn-over in all areas of staffing. Continuity of care is certainly important at the lead teacher level, but it is also important at all levels of staffing. Parents and especially children need to know and trust the adults that they see in their lives. You don’t want to have bus drivers and food program staff leaving all the time for retail and fast food jobs and you certainly don’t want your teaching assistance and family support specialists leaving for higher pay in other fields.

On Employment Related Day Care, I know that the Early Learning Division doesn’t distribute the subsidy portion of the funds- that falls under DHS for rates including incentives for providers who are Spark, formerly Quality Rating and Improvement System, rated. However, as you know, the federal funds pass through ELD to DHS and with the new federal inspection requirements for regulated subsidy care without the additional funds to support it, we are now faced with reducing further the number of families that are served in Employment Related Day Care. For several years, we have increased our focus on quality but only last session were we also able to make an increased investment in subsidy and access in the program. The focus on quality isn’t a bad thing, it is simply about finding the balance when funds are so limited. Quality child care and early learning experiences are crucial for having our children in safe, caring environments that help prepare them for success in school. Increased quality also helps



bolster the conversations around the professionalization and increased wages of the workforce. With fewer than 16% of eligible families being served by Employment Related Day Care, we need to find ways to provide better access to affordable child care settings that meet the needs of parents and children.

My focus on these areas isn't meant to take away from the need for other critical programs under the purview of the Early Learning Division. Many of the families that receive care and education through our child care programs and Oregon PreK and Head Starts depend or have accessed other services as well.

As a member of the Early Learning Council, I would like to say that an appropriately staffed Early Learning Division is crucial as well. There is so much work to do to meet the goals of keeping families stable and attached and having children enter school ready to learn. While there are many doing the direct service work, without the policy expertise at the Division level, we won't have proper guidance to keep us all on track.

It is clear to me that the need for these and other wrap around services outpaces what we have in funds. I ask you support these budget requests and the needed increases in early learning workforce wages and services to children and families by raising much needed revenue.

Dear Chair Livley, Vice Chairs Hack and Piluso and members of this trusted committee;

My name is Angie Lowe, I am the owner of Tiny Hands Specialized Child Care a fully inclusive Certified Family child care program located in Stayton, and a proud Preschool Promise provider with twenty years' experience, with an emphasis on working with children and families with special needs. My fully inclusive program allows all children access to community based programs, such as preschool promise regardless of needs, disabilities, medical needs or behaviors, while allowing families to continue working. We work with outside agencies to ensure that each child is receiving the highest quality of care and education. I just learned, yesterday, that I am now a step 9 on the Oregon Registry, the professional development program for child care providers run through Portland State University and am just shy of twenty hours in achieving my 9.5. Just this morning, I received the call that I have been granted a 5 Star Rating in Spark, formerly the Quality Rating and Improvement System. I am also a member of AFSCME local 132, Child Care Providers Together. I am here today to SUPPORT HB 2013 and the changes it will make to Preschool Promise program in regards to the need for the head teacher to hold a Bachelor's Degree in early childhood education.

I take great pride in my fully inclusive program and my ability to have a high quality program that includes myself and my staff's current level of education. Both of my staff are working on their step 7 in the Oregon registry. I am currently enrolled in Ashworth College in their BA program for early Childhood Education. The current amount of hours needed to run my quality Child Care, along with the demands of Preschool Promise have left me with very little time. I believe that college education is Not the only important attribute that makes a program quality, knowledge and trainings do. College level classes are not easily implemented into our daily program needs, community based trainings are generated towards the daily needs of our child care business and are easily transitioned from our trainings into our program which directly effects the children. Typical trainings are approximately three hours and are directed towards child care, where I can spend upwards of fifty hours in just one of my college classes and NOT gain the amount of knowledge that I can from a community based class. I believe that community based trainings are more effective and would allow our time to be spent working with our children in our business which would produce a higher quality and more effective program.

Despite my time constraints, I am very glad to be part of the Preschool program and I am grateful to have this opportunity to speak about the needs of our early learning work force. Child care providers work long, hard hours to achieve our quality programs and we are asking for the Early Learning Division study on wages and professional development include all of child care and not be limited to preschools. Increasing the wages of all child care, will continue to increase the quality and access for ALL children currently in care or in need of early learning experiences. We ask for these wage increases to continue our education that most of us pay out of our own pockets, to continue to provide nutritious hot meals to children that may not have one otherwise. I am asking that our wages be increased so that ALL children can access a High Quality Child Care Programs and have continued support for families that rely on Preschool Promise.

I also would like to close with one last statement a BA in early childhood education does not equal a high quality program, nor does it provide a safe and loving environment in which children grow or thrive in. A highly trained provider that is paid appropriately does. Higher wages allow for less employee turn

around which builds a stable foundation for love and trust in children while building relationships with families and the community.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Chair, Vice Chairs and members of the committee today as we all move forward with HB 2013 and invest in the programs that build foundations for our children.

Angie Lowe
Tiny Hands Specialized Child Care
Stayton, OR

Dear Chair Lively, co-chairs Hack and Piluso and members of the Committee,

My name is Autumn David, I am the president for AFSCME Local 132 Child Care Providers Together. I am a certified family child care provider in Salem and have been in business for 20 years. I have 12 Preschool Promise children, I am step 10 on the Oregon registry and our program is 5 stars on Spark, formerly the Quality Rating and Improvement System. Five stars is the highest rating a child care facility can receive and has high standards for training for me and my staff, parent engagement, and of course quality care for the children.

First I want to thank you for helping make Preschool Promise a reality. I have seen firsthand how this is benefiting our community and the children that would not be able to participate in preschool. When I was selected to be a Preschool Promise provider I was honored. I have built my program from ground up over the last 20 years and am proud of the program we have. When Preschool Promise was first starting, I attended meetings and it was brought up that the qualifications would be the lead teacher would have to have a bachelors degree. I advocated against this as I knew this would keep many quality providers, including me, from being the lead teachers in our own programs. Oregon has built a system called the Oregon Registry, a professional development ladder for providers to show the step they are on based on hours and types of training. I am a step 10 which is equivalent to the hours of training I would have taken to earn a bachelors degree in the child care field. With the current requirement for Preschool Promise of having a bachelors degree I have hired a lead teacher instead of working as the lead teacher myself.

Accepting to participate in Preschool Promise I have thought hard if it is worth my time and effort to go back to school for a bachelors. At this time in my life I do not think it is a wise choice. There is no funding for further education, there is no replacement of time this would take away of my husband, children and now grand children. Would the time be worth taking away from my childcare program I have worked so hard to build? We work long hours preparing curriculum and food, cleaning and doing administrative work beyond our 13 hour work day. I have to think what benefits would this really give me? I cannot think of any way this would benefit my program. I agree high standards are important and think the system of the Oregon Registry could work in guiding the requirements..

I ask that you feel free to visit my program and see how having a degree would benefit me at this time in our journey. I am not opposed to having a degree and applaud those who do but it is not something that will make my program better. I ask that you consider the changes this bill would make.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my story.

Autumn David
Island Adventures Preschool & Child Care