



May 10, 2017

Chair Roblan and Members of the Senate Committee on Education:

On behalf of Oregon AFSCME Council 75 I write to express our support of HB 2013. Oregon AFSCME Council 75 represents 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.

The changes provided in HB 2013 are simple, yet critical in continuing the conversations around providing access to quality preschool for children at all income levels in the state as well as continuing the conversations around raising the wages of our early learning and child care workforce. A quality program doesn't have to have a teacher with a formal degree. Community based trainings that are often more affordable and accessible to these providers are far more effective in giving in-home providers the practical skills in creating curriculum and running a quality program than their formal education. The changes in HB 2013 recognize this and allow for the different paths of professional development a child care and preschool provider may take.

HB 2013 also allows for more flexibility around the lead teacher pay by providing for guidelines that will allow for the entire location's staff to be considered and not only one classroom at a location. For those represented by a labor contract, Preschool Promise as it was implemented, was a bit of a sting. Head Start teachers, all employees really, haven't received pay raises that have kept up with inflation. Many could qualify for Head Start and other public services. So, when Preschool Promise rolled out, Head Start locations that became part of the program had one classroom where the lead teacher would be making more than the lead teachers in other classrooms. The only difference was the funding stream. This was not equal pay for equal work and contractually, this is a problem. Even for locations that do not have a union represented workforce, executive directors recognized that paying one teacher for the same job others had been doing for years would cause significant morale issues. We must look for ways to raise the wages of all staff in Head Start and Early Learning - lead teachers, teaching assistants, family support specialists, bus drivers and food service personnel.

HB 2013 allows for the conversation on workforce wages to continue. I think it is safe for me to say that all of my colleagues in early learning and child care advocacy recognize that we have far to go in raising the wages of this critical workforce and I appreciate that the bill calls for a report on the wages of the early learning workforce and their continued professional development.

AFSCME representatives have mentioned in other committees and numerous meetings that meeting the needs of our early learning and child care workforce and the demand for their services will take a much more significant investment than what we currently are making in the state. Until we fund early learning and child care like we do our kindergarten through college system, affordability for families and low pay for providers will continue to be an issue. To make these kind of investments, we will need revenue.

I urge your support of HB 2013.

Sincerely,

Joe Baessler, Political Director