

To: Senate Finance and Revenue Committee
From: Dana Hepper, Director of Policy & Program, Children's Institute
Date: Tuesday, February 13th, 2018
Re: Support Authorizing the Creation of Children's Service Districts (SB 1515)

Children's Institute, which is dedicated to working for Oregon's underserved children from birth to age 8, supports the passage of SB 1515, authorizing the creation of children's special districts. We know these years provide the critical foundation for children's learning and development.

This bill would provide a mechanism whereby communities could locally fund and care for children who are not currently served by programs in their area. The funding would ease the burden on programs that already exist but do not serve all children who need it. For example, across Oregon only one-third of low-income children have access to high-quality preschool. Just 20 percent of families facing substantial risk factors have a trained home visitor available to provide proven parent coaching and support.

We know that children in poverty who participate in early childhood, after-school, and summer school programs are more likely to succeed in school and become contributing citizens in their communities. They are also more likely to have opportunities for adequate nutrition, which helps them do better in school. Children from low-income families who do not have the opportunity to participate in these programs are less likely to graduate from high school and find long-term success in life.

SB1515, which allows citizens to sign petitions to organize these children's service districts, does not cost the state any money. Please provide communities with the opportunity to engage local voters in helping children succeed.