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80th LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
JOINT TASK FORCE ON ACCESS TO QUALITY AFFORDABLE CHILD CARE

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Problem Statement, Goal Statement and Guiding Principles

Problem statement

Oregon's child care system is failing. It is chronically underfunded. Quality care is not uniformly available or affordable. Oregon's children, parents, providers, communities – particularly those that are already marginalized or disadvantaged – as well as Oregon's employers, economy and education system are all adversely impacted.

A child's early years are critical to their physical, cognitive and socio-emotional development. Yet, *affordable* quality child care (that does not exceed seven percent of a household's income) *does not exist* for most families. Access is also starkly inequitable: Black and Latinx communities, parents of children with disabilities, low-income families, and those living in rural areas have even greater difficulty obtaining care for their young ones.

Oregon's system of child care is also decentralized. Governance is bifurcated, inefficient, and confusing for parents and providers.

Child care workers have no clear career path or professional progression and are paid poverty wages. Child care providers are required to deliver numerous services that parents cannot afford to pay for.

Oregon employers and Oregon's economy suffer from lost productivity, job disruption, and lost wages as a result of unavailable, deficient, or unstable child care.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the child care crisis, and without access to a sufficient supply of affordable, quality child care, Oregonians will not be able to return to work; economic recovery will stall; and fewer children will enter kindergarten ready to succeed.

Goal Statement

The Task Force will develop one-year, three-year and five-year recommendations for providing equitable access to high-quality, affordable, and culturally-affirming child care for all Oregon families, including:

- Recommendations to increase eligible families' use of child care subsidies.

- Recommendations to expand access to high-quality, subsidized child care for families that are not currently eligible for it, but who cannot otherwise afford or access child care.

The Task Force will consider, at a minimum:

- Availability of high-quality child care providers that meet the needs of families, including culturally specific care and workable hours of operation.
- Copayments.
- Burdensome administrative practices and requirements.
- Reimbursement rates.
- Economic stability of families receiving child care subsidies.
- Access to professional development and quality supports.
- Access to child care that allows parents to work and provides positive development opportunities for children.

Task Force discussions will be informed by shared values:

- Equitable outcomes for all Oregon children and families
- Respecting and supporting families and providers
- The incorporation of provider, family, and business voices
- The inclusion of children with disabilities
- The acknowledgment of systemic racism
- Relieving family payment burdens
- Fair compensation for child care workers and providers
- Commitment to a racially diverse workforce
- Supporting children's social-emotional and cognitive development
- Providing high-quality services that are culturally affirming

Principles for Oregon's Child Care System

Principle 1

Quality early care and education and school-age care are public goods supporting children's success in kindergarten and beyond.

Principle 2

Quality early care and education and school-age care are essential parts of the economic infrastructure supporting families. This care and education allows parents to work, increasing their stability and economic self-sufficiency. It also supports local businesses by creating an available workforce and ensuring those employees can consistently appear and focus on work.

Principle 3

Because of the public benefits of quality early care and education and school-age care, all children and families should have affordable access to quality early care and education and school-age care that meets their needs and preferences, is culturally and linguistically responsive, and inclusive of children with disabilities.

Principle 4

Because only *quality* early care and education and school-age programs deliver public benefits, early care and education programs must be resourced, supported and monitored to ensure quality.

Principle 5

Diverse, well compensated and supported providers/educators are essential for quality early care and education and school-age care system that supports the healthy development of children.

Principle 6

Quality early care and education and school-age care can be delivered in a variety of settings including child care centers, schools, Head Starts, family child care homes, and Family, Friend and Neighbor (FFN) providers.

Principle 7

Child care providers need stable, adequate public financing in order to offer fair compensation to staff and deliver quality early learning opportunities to children without charging parents more than they can afford.

Principle 8

All families should have access to quality early care and education and school-age care that is affordable. Public financing is needed as families cannot afford the current cost burden of quality early care and education and school-age care.