



KATE BROWN
Governor

December 14, 2020

Dear Co-Chairs Rep. Power and Sen. Taylor, Sen. Knopp and Rep. Hayden and appointed task force members:

As you all know, a strong early learning system that provides families with high quality, affordable, culturally responsive services for their youngest children is essential to our state. I'm proud of the commitment and advances we've made to create a more equitable early learning system here in Oregon. At the same time, we have more to do – not just in expanding access to our programs, but addressing our early childhood education (ECE) governance structure.

Oregon took an important first step when it established the Early Learning Council in 2011, followed by the creation of the Early Learning Division (ELD) in 2013. But as we continue to invest in early childhood education, it is clear that our system must continue to evolve. Additional governance work, particularly around unifying our child care system, is necessary for us to fully realize Oregon's responsibility to foster a seamless early care and education approach for children and families.

Our current approach to early childhood governance results in a separation of critical early care and education efforts, separating critical child care subsidy services in the Oregon Department of Human Services from child care licensing in the Early Learning Division. I support the leadership across our agencies and divisions, and applaud the commitment and talent of state staff – especially as we have all pivoted to respond to the crisis of this pandemic. This level of collaboration across agencies on child care is essential as we continue to evolve to best meet the needs of our young children and families.

Earlier this year, I confirmed that the ELD has policy authority over ERDC during the pandemic. This has resulted in stronger coordination across ODHS and ELD to meet the needs of child care providers, children and families during the pandemic. I support early childhood education governance reforms, including moving the Employment Related Day Care (ERDC) child care subsidy program into the Early Learning Division is a necessary next step to build on this work. This will permit progress to be made on core needs of our system that include supply building, “no wrong door” outreach and eligibility for all publicly funded early care and education programs, unification of ECE workforce and health and safety supports, and efficient provider payment approaches for all early care and education providers. Allowing one state organization to be accountable for all early care and education implementation will help us ensure that families and providers know where to turn for help, problem solving, and that we build a child care system that Oregon's children and families deserve.

I commend you and the members of the Joint Task Force on Access to Quality Affordable Child Care for the work you have done this year, and look forward to working in collaboration with you to advance a new approach to governance that can help us better serve children, families, providers and the broader Oregon community.

Governor Kate Brown