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February 20, 2019

TO: Rep. Alissa Keny-Guyer, Chair, House Committee on Human Services and Housing

CC: Senator Tim Knopp                      Representative Cheri Helt                      Representative Jack Zika  
900 Court St. NE S-309                      900 Court St. NE H-371                      900 Court St. NE H-387  
Salem, Oregon 97301                      Salem, Oregon 97301                      Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: Early Learning & Child Care Scarcity

Dear Rep. Keny-Guyer,

Bend and Central Oregon are in a child care desert. In Central Oregon, less than 33% of children have access to a regulated spot in child care. Numerous groups, including task forces led by local businesses, non-profits, government agencies, students, and faculty/staff of higher education, and other groups have been working collaboratively on this issue and the role of community partnerships in addressing this need.

In a recent survey of Bend Chamber members, 97 percent of chamber member employees find it difficult to find child care. More than 90 percent of surveyed employers say their business is impacted by unavailable or unaffordable child care options for their employees. Nearly 80 percent of the businesses impacted are small businesses with 0 – 50 employees.

As your committee deliberates over the barriers to having adequate, quality child care, it is critical to reduce financial barriers to new startups and expansions for both centers and in-home care providers. Streamlining permitting and regulatory processes that do not impact safe, affordable, high-quality child care, while rewarding exceptional providers, is also important to increasing the number of opportunities for additional child care. These incentives should be clear and implementable by those who may be starting their first business, and by commercial building owners.

We urge you to consider removing barriers to increase high-quality and affordable child care in our region.

Sincerely,

Katy Brooks  
CEO  
Bend Chamber of Commerce