



House Committee on Education
Re: HB 2897, Relating to grants for early childhood programs

March 4, 2019

Chair Doherty, Vice Chair Alonso Leon, Vice Chair Helt, and Members of the Committee:
Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 2897, which would establish an Early Childhood Equity Fund to support culturally specific early learning and make an investment of \$20 million into this fund. My name is Jenny Lee, and I am the Advocacy Director at the Coalition of Communities of Color.

The Coalition of Communities of Color is an alliance of culturally-specific community based organizations with representation from the following communities of color: African, African American, Asian, Latino, Middle Eastern, Native American, Pacific Islander, and Slavic. Our mission is to address the socioeconomic disparities, institutional racism and inequity of services experienced by our families, children and communities; and to organize our communities for collective action resulting in social change to obtain self-determination, wellness, justice and prosperity.

High-quality early childhood education lays the foundation for educational and family success. Many Coalition of Communities of Color member organizations offer high quality, culturally-specific early learning programs and services to communities including the Latino, African-American, and Native American communities. These programs result in strong educational outcomes for children and families of color. Despite their proven track record, these community-based programs are currently not eligible for state resources.

This legislation would address this gap by establishing an Early Childhood Equity Fund to invest in culturally specific early learning, early childhood, and parent support programs in Oregon. To be eligible, an organization must have a record of providing culturally specific early learning programs, with a history of successful outreach, support, and resources to underserved children and families. By drawing on the cultural experiences of their community, these programs equip children and families with the skills they need to successfully enter kindergarten.

Oregon's growing diversity means that we need to begin investing now in the future of all of our children by meeting their cultural and linguistic needs and ensure that culturally-specific stakeholders are formally incorporated into the state's early learning system and recognizes for the important role they play in supporting families and closing the opportunity gap for children of color.

On behalf of the Coalition of Communities of Color, I urge you to take action to ensure that every child in Oregon receives a strong start to their education, including those who would most benefit from high-quality culturally-specific early learning programs.

Thank you,

Jenny Lee
Advocacy Director
Coalition of Communities of Color

