



## Home of the Kids Zone

[www.neighborsforkids.org](http://www.neighborsforkids.org)

[info@neighborsforkids.org](mailto:info@neighborsforkids.org)

April 23, 2019

Neighbors For Kids

634 SE Highway 101

Depoe Bay, OR. 97341

Subject: Senate Bill 543 Children's Service District — SUPPORT

Oregon House Human Services and Housing Committee

Chair Keny-Guyer

Vice Chair Noble and Vice Chair Sanchez

Representatives Helt, Meek, Mitchell, Schouten, Williams, and Zika

Dear Committe Members,

I write on behalf of the Board of Directors, staff, and volunteers of Neighbors for Kids (NFK) in Depoe Bay, Oregon, urging you to enact SB 543. NFK is a 501(c)3 non-profit dedicated to supporting families in Lincoln County during out-of-school-hours by providing quality after-school and summer programs to pre-school and school-aged children in a safe, affordable, fun learning environment. NFK was created through a grassroots effort of community members standing against rising youth drug and alcohol use in their town by providing kids something fun and fulfilling to do after school. NFK celebrates its 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary next month. Ours is a compelling story and part of why we so strongly support SB 543. Visit <https://neighborsforkids.org/our-story/> to learn more about NKF's history. It is also worthy noting that, at the urging of our larger community, NFK recently expanded to provide a daily preschool program from 8 am – 5:30 pm, with ½ day and full day slots available.

The state has made purposeful efforts in the past years to promote increased quality care and education services for our children, but those ventures have struggled to have significant impact. In 2015, Preschool Promise, a program to serve 3- and 4-year-olds living at or below 200% of the federal poverty threshold was passed by the legislature. However, according to the Children's Institute 2019 Policy Brief, only 1300 children statewide are being reached; none of these children reside in Lincoln County. According to Children First for Oregon's 2018 County Data report, the percentage of children in Lincoln County living in families with income below 100% of the federally-designated poverty level in 2018 was 30%, which is 12.8% higher than the statewide level and third-highest of any Oregon county. The percentage of 3- and 4-year-olds

enrolled in preschool in Lincoln County is 30.7%, 13.5% lower than the statewide level and fourth lowest of any Oregon county. It is clear from the CFFO report that rural children are acutely affected by both of these issues but in the case of Lincoln County, we would challenge anyone to find a county so poor in so many measures of child well-being.

Worse, the numbers by themselves don't factor in the critical lack of quality infant/toddler care Lincoln County faces and the long history our county has in attempting to address the issue. Since the loss of our local Child Care Resource and Referral, (we are now served from Albany) we do not have current statistics available, but a plethora of anecdotal evidence demonstrates that the situation has only worsened. We have one certified center in our county that provides care for infants and toddlers. All other infant and toddler care is dependent on family child care providers; there is a limited number of providers willing or able to offer this care and they simply can't provide the number of slots needed to care for our families.

In the face of these bleak statistics, we see such great hope for SB 543 to be a tool to provide local and sustainable long-term funding for the children's services we so desperately need. We have a great example in our county of a successful service district being voted in by the citizens starting in 1988 to support Oregon State University's Extension Service office. To provide context: In 1918 the second-ever OSU Extension office was founded in Lincoln County. Amidst fears that the county would no longer be able to fund the Extension Service, the Extension Service District was voted in and it continues to serve the community today, changing the lives of people involved in it. OSU Extension even hosted the local Child Care Resource and Referral until October 2017; moving the program was a state agency decision.

We are excited to have the opportunity to move forward with a Children's Services District to give local families the support they need - support that every child deserves. We therefore urge you to vote yes to SB 543 to help all Oregonians move the needle of achievement upward for their children and families.

Sincerely,

Liz Martin, Board Chair