

To: House Committee on Economic Development
From: Becky Armistead
Principal, Ocean Crest Elementary School
Special Education Director, Bandon School District #54
Date: May 15, 2019
Re: Child Care is Economic Infrastructure

Chair Lively and Members of the Committee,

My name is Becky Armistead and I am an administrator in the Bandon School District. In my work as an elementary teacher, elementary principal, and special education director, I am regularly faced with working within our current system to meet the varied needs of our children in a way that is very different than it was when I entered the profession. As a young mother, I was so very lucky to find an in home child care professional that became like a part of our family. But the “luck” factor is harder to come by as licensed child care is sparse in our region – especially if you have a child younger than 3 years old.

In my role as elementary principal, the childcare deficit in our region hit close to home when a local provider made the decision to retire after more than 10 years serving the young children in Bandon. One of my school secretaries was preparing for maternity leave and no longer had a child care slot for her new baby. After extending her maternity leave to continue the search, she eventually resigned her position based solely on the lack of available childcare. While she is fortunate to have the means to be a stay-at-home mother, many in our community do not have that financial freedom. This shortage has definitely impacted our ability to recruit both certified and classified employees. It is a concern shared by many of the families that we serve, as well, as they are struggling to make ends meet without the ability for both parents to work.

As this childcare shortage reached a crisis level in Bandon, several community partners were starting discussions about how we could bring together collective expertise and come up with a plan to meet this need for our young families. At that time, Marie Simonds of Wild Rivers Coast Alliance facilitated a meeting with local stakeholders including the school district, Bandon Dunes, Southern Coos Hospital, Coast Community Health, Oregon Community Foundation, and Ford Family Foundation to gauge the support for finding a solution to this predicament. At that time, the minds at the table were clear in their commitment to serving our young families with infants even though it is not a financially viable without support. We have contracted the services of a consultant with a rich background in building business models and specifically in early learning, Heidi McGowan, and are now working to secure a fiscal backbone organization for some “back of house” tasks. Our

hope is to move forward as quickly as possible, working diligently to create a model that is sustainable and of high quality.

While we are making strong headway in working on solutions in our small, rural town, the need for adequate child care and legislative support for such an endeavor is far more widespread than our region. The state is a significant player in the child care market and can be a transformational piece of solutions across our state. By increasing reimbursement rates, regulating providers, and paying providers serving very low income families, you are poised to be change makers in the climate of our economy and impacting the future of our communities across Oregon. I am hopeful that today will be the start of a deep, more long-term and meaningful conversation about the legislature's role in addressing the child care crisis in Oregon.

Thank you for your time and work to study and propose solutions for the current child care shortage. Please support HB 2346 and help our children, help our families, and help our state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Becky Armistead". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the "Sincerely," text.

Becky Armistead
Principal, Ocean Crest Elementary School
Special Education Director, Bandon School District #54