

To: House Committee on Economic Development
From: Dr. John P. Bacon
Date: May 15, 2019
Re: Child Care is Economic Infrastructure

Chair Lively, members of the committee:

My name is Dr. John Bacon with Southwestern Oregon Community College. There are several areas that are impacted by the lack of early care and education in Coos County and the Southern Oregon Coast. These areas include:

- *Behavioral Development* – As part of a 2016 assessment created by Dovetailing Consulting (DC) to support The Ford Family Foundation to assess child and childcare needs of the region, several school district superintendents interviewed noted, “increasing numbers of entering kindergartners have serious social and behavioral needs. (DC)”
- *School Readiness* – “School district results for the 2015-2016 *Oregon Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (OKA)* show that entering kindergartners in 2 of [Coos] County’s 6 school districts had lower readiness rates than the state average in 2 or more of the 4 domains (Approaches to Learning, Early Math and Letter Names and Letter Sounds).”
- *Academic Success* – Grade-appropriate reading proficiency is a predictor of overall academic success. Last year in Coos County, 38% of 3rd grade students were proficient in English Language Arts (compared to the state average of 47.4%). The County-wide high school graduation rate was 57.1% in 2014 compared to the statewide rate of 68% (PSU).
- *Safety* – The lack of licensed, quality childcare providers results in families seeking care regardless of licensure. This is especially true in more remote areas where access to care is even more difficult. “The number of family child care homes in remote areas continues to decrease with many families using unlicensed care (DC).”

However, it must also be mentioned that the lack of early care and education presents an issue for the economy of Oregon as well. According to Nobel Laureate Economist James Heckman,

"High-quality, reliable childcare pays for the entire program before the child enters kindergarten. The economic gains of freeing mothers to enter the workforce, build skills, and earn income pays for the cost of the program in the short-term while long-term benefits for the children accrue into adulthood."

I implore you to support HB 2346. This bill creates a task force to study the current child care shortage and propose solutions. I hope today is the start of a deeper and longer-term conversation about the legislature's role in addressing this crisis.

Respectfully,



Dr. John P. Bacon