

To: House Committee on Business & Labor
From: Dana Hepper, Director of Policy & Advocacy, Children's Institute
Date: March 25th, 2019
Re: House Bill 3031, Paid Family and Medical Leave

Members of the committee, my name is Dana Hepper. I am the Director of Policy & Advocacy at the Children's Institute. Children's Institute is a statewide organization that advocates for investments in young children that allow every child to reach their full potential. Children's Institute focuses on the first 8 years of life because this is the period in which the most rapid brain development occurs. We support the development of a Paid Family and Medical Leave program in Oregon, as proposed in HB 3031, because the first weeks and months of a baby's life are a critical window to be in a safe, nurturing environment building a positive bond with their parents.

Paid Family Leave is not currently available to far to many families. A shocking 1 out of 4 new mothers returns to work within two weeks of giving birth. This can be dangerous for moms, unhealthy for babies, and unusual for businesses whose workers are not likely at full productivity. The United States relies on individual employers to offer this as a benefit to their workers, and

Every other industrialized nation has a system of

Culturally and linguistically specific early learning opportunities support kindergarten readiness and student success. Research shows that an achievement gap between children of varying races, cultures, and linguistic backgrounds is present long before kindergarten. Promoting and developing a positive cultural and racial identity, however, has been shown to positively impact student experiences and achievement outcomes. Supporting native language development strengthens later English language development. Promoting bilingualism increases children's ability to be nimble, quick, and better able to deal with ambiguity. These assets are effectively promoted by culturally specific organizations across Oregon who may not have access to existing state funding streams.

As Oregon's population becomes more diverse, high-quality culturally specific early learning programs are in greater demand. In Oregon, nearly 40% of babies born are children of color and in five Oregon counties most of the under-five population are children of color. Oregon must develop and invest in culturally specific organizations and services specifically created to work with families of color. This is exactly what the Early Childhood Equity Fund will do.

Culturally specific services are a critical piece of the early childhood system. The Equity Fund will compliment other efforts to expand access to preschool, improve services in early childhood special education, increase the affordability of quality child care, and support a diverse workforce. Full inclusion of culturally specific providers in state funding and policy discussions will strengthen our work for children of color across programs and funding streams.

We urge you to vote yes on HB 2897 and advocate for the \$20 million in initial funding requested to get started. Oregon cannot wait.