

To: The Oregon Legislature

Re: Special Session Priorities

Date: August 6, 2020

From: Oregon's Early Childhood Coalition

Dear Leaders of Oregon,

The Early Childhood Coalition thanks you for demonstrating your commitment to Oregon's youngest children in the 2019 legislative session. In these unprecedented times, we ask you to uphold this commitment and prioritize the needs of our youngest children and families furthest from opportunity and who bear the disproportionate weight of COVID-19.

The effects of the pandemic on Oregon's youngest children and families have laid bare the deep racial inequities and injustices against Black, Indigenous, and people of color. As you know, the health, education, housing and early learning systems were not designed by and for these communities. What we are now witnessing are the consequences of this exclusion. The striking difference in access to opportunity and public services, and corresponding disparities in health, education, and economic outcomes these Oregonians are facing is devastating. As the pandemic continues, these disparities are widening.

As a network of over 40+ organizations, our coalition partners have worked tirelessly in community-driven response to both COVID-19 and the pandemic of racial injustice. We have seen and heard directly the needs of Black, Indigenous, and families of color across urban and rural settings. Community based organizations and networks like Early Learning Hubs are uniquely positioned to connect parents to culturally specific and holistic systems support for health and early learning. These services uplift community self-determination and mitigate disparities by ensuring every young child and family has what they need to thrive.

We have a tremendous opportunity to impact meaningful change for generations if we listen to Black, Indigenous, and communities of color and invest in strategies that support self-determination, child and family resilience, well-being, and school readiness. We ask you to continue Oregon's commitment to the Early Learning Account as part of a sustained movement for a racially just and equitable future.

We specifically ask you to:

- Hold ourselves accountable to the original intent of the Student Success Act by honoring the co-chairs' full \$170 million allocated to early childhood and protecting the dedicated 20 percent of the Student Success Act flowing into the Early Learning Account.
- Prioritize investments that are specifically designed to advance racial equity – the Early Childhood Equity Fund, Student Success Plans for Black/African American students, American Indian/Alaskan Native students, and Latino/a students.
- Uphold developmental support for building early childhood systems – Early Learning Hubs, Focused Child Care Networks, and Healthy Families Oregon.

When we prioritize investments that center the needs of Black, Indigenous, and children of color, early childhood programs and services can mitigate disparities by race/ethnicity, income, geography, disability, language, immigrant and refugee status, houselessness and foster care. When we work with intention to dismantle systemic barriers for our children furthest from justice, all of Oregon’s children have the opportunity to thrive.

Sincerely,



## EARLY CHILDHOOD COALITION QUESTIONS FOR GUIDANCE

In what ways are we **meaningfully engaging** children and families from our most vulnerable communities to better understand their experience during this crisis and the impact of our decisions? To what extent are we using **their perspectives** to shape decision making?

In what ways are we **creating opportunities** to collaborate, build partnerships, and align strategies across sectors and systems to effectively **support all children and families**?

In what ways are we remaining accountable to addressing **racial and economic disparities** in access to quality early learning, health, and education that impact **historically underserved children**?

In what ways will we be **accountable to children and families** who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, live in remote rural communities, experience disabilities and delays, speak multiple languages, navigate immigration and refugee systems, experience houselessness and foster care?

In what ways are we directing resources to reach children with the **greatest need for support**, and investing in Oregon's **long-term capacity** to provide equitable access to meaningful health and learning opportunities?

In what ways are we **sustaining and bolstering the unique assets, strengths, and cultural contributions** of Oregon's diverse children, families, and communities?



# THE TIME IS NOW

As we work to eliminate racial and economic disparities in early childhood outcomes, the Early Childhood Coalition’s decisions and actions will be guided by the experiences and self-determination of Black, Indigenous, and families of color, and families and providers historically excluded from policy and budget decisions.

As you make difficult policy and budgetary decisions, we ask in turn for meaningful inclusion of these Oregonians when reimagining a just and equitable system.

*“This is a great program for my toddler to develop skills that prepare her for preschool... She learns teamwork, how to share, the basic ABC-123, and the routine of circle and story time.”*

EMILY, PARENT AT IRCO’S P-3 GROUP  
FUNDED BY AN EARLY LEARNING HUB

*“No matter what community you come from, if you’re a Family of Color, you have a voice, and it’s important that you have that voice. PAC represents everyone. One of the biggest reasons why I feel like a lot of parents come to our meetings... is because they want to have a voice in their child’s education...they’re coming and they’re getting the tools that they need to empower themselves as a family, but also to empower their community”*

LYDIA, EARLY LEARNING MULTNOMAH’S PARENT  
ACCOUNTABILITY COUNCIL

*“When you feel isolated from other people because of the pandemic situation, having the support from other parents, makes me feel less alone”*

MOTHER OF TWO, PARENTING TOGETHER  
PROGRAM AT ADELANTE MUJERES

The Early Childhood Coalition is a network of 40+ organizations committed to making early care, education, and health a priority in Oregon.

For more information visit <https://childinst.org/early-childhood-coalition/>

