



March 29, 2021

Joint Committee On Ways & Means Subcommittee On Education

Dear Chair Frederick, Chair McLain, Senator Dembrow, Senator Thomsen, Representative Alonso Leon, Representative Levy, Representative Reschke and Representative Ruiz:

We are members of [ReadyNation](#), a network of over 3,000 business leaders, including over 100 here in Oregon, who work to build a skilled and diverse workforce by promoting solutions that prepare children to succeed in education, work and life. We're writing today to express our support for one of these key solutions: quality early childhood investments. Early childhood programs are even more essential now, as many parents slowly return to work, and as many infants and toddlers deal with the toll of the pandemic, which has often taken the form of increased stress, coupled with decreased socialization and learning.

**To this end, we ask that you vote to fully fund \$127 million for the 2021-2023 early childhood budget.**

We know that expanding pre-K accessibility and quality boosts kids' healthy development and long-term success. Turns out, it also saves us money. A well-respected, independent cost-benefit analysis of nearly 20 different studies of high-quality pre-kindergarten programs around the nation showed that pre-kindergarten can return, on average, a "profit" (economic benefits minus cost) to society of nearly \$27,000 for every child served. Cost savings accrued from cutting crime and incarceration, reducing education costs, and increasing participants' future wages. **Applying this estimate to the 30,000 children served by Oregon pre-kindergarten as of 2019, this will save approximately \$540 million over the lives of the children attending.**

The new investments in early learning, would help thousands of families, including by creating 6,000 additional Oregon Pre-K and Pre-kindergarten Promise spots for families who struggle with accessing affordable, quality care.

Additionally, a **\$10 million increase in funds for Healthy Families Oregon would expand the state's voluntary home visiting program.** Younger children (ages birth to three) benefit from these programs, which help provide inexperienced parents the resources they need to feel supported and to build nurturing relationships with their children. We see that in kids' first years of life, home visiting programs like Healthy Families Oregon and Early Head Start not only serve as a critical support system for struggling parents--but they also significantly reduce rates of child abuse and neglect.

Finally, along with quality pre-K and home visiting programs, we ask for your support in expanding other programs that promote equitable outcomes for kids. The Early Childhood Equity Fund, the Student Investment Account, and other innovative programs are designed to be culturally specific, meet the needs of those with learning or behavioral differences, and ensure that groups who have historically struggled in academic settings have the opportunity to excel. Every child in our state deserves that opportunity.

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**We urge you to support and pass these much needed \$127 million investments in early childhood programs.**

Sincerely,

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