

# EARLY CHILDHOOD EQUITY COLLABORATIVE

Testimony re: SB 5513– Early Learning Division Budget

March 29, 2021

Dear Co-Chairs Frederick and McLain and members of the Ways & Means Education Subcommittee,

The Early Childhood Equity Collaborative is a coalition of community-based organizations with decades of experience providing culturally-specific services and programs to children and families. We urge your support of SB 5513 to maintain current service levels for the Early Learning Division and add \$127 million in investments that are targeted to reduce racial disparities in access to opportunities for young children and their families. We wish to highlight a few of the investments that we believe are the most critical for addressing racial disparities:

- **While all early learning programs are intended to support families navigating a multitude of socioeconomic barriers, the Early Learning Equity Fund was our response to addressing persistent structural issues. Increasing the Equity Fund by \$3.4 million as part of this package is needed** to expand the program to serve more children and families. Early learning programs, just like other systems, were not designed with our diverse racial/ethnic, cultural, and linguistic needs in mind. Culturally specific organizations work with families in their communities to self-determine what they need for their young children to thrive. We championed the Equity Fund, less than 1% of the Student Success Act budget in 2019-21, knowing that Oregon’s Black communities, Indigenous communities, and communities of color have distinct experiences with white supremacy’s many manifestations. Each also has unique cultural traditions and histories. That’s why we need culturally-specific approaches to equipping our young children with the tools they need to thrive.
- **As our state builds on the needed infrastructure for our early childhood systems to close racial disparities, we need to ensure that early childhood professionals reflect the diversity of Oregon’s children and families, and have access to robust coaching and support to prevent exclusion from early childhood settings. That’s why we need a minimum of \$5.8 million to invest in culturally responsive coaching for educators.** Black children are expelled from preschool classrooms at 3.6 times the rate of White children.<sup>1</sup> While there is relatively little research that explains this disproportionality in early childhood, parallel studies regarding disproportionate “push-out” in K-12 settings suggest implicit bias, inconsistent use of policies, inadequate support for educators, and under-resourced programs are often associated with discipline disparities<sup>2</sup>. [Reimagine Oregon](#) has led and advocated on this issue and it is also a priority for other partners including the Black Child Development PDX and the Early Childhood Coalition.
- **We strongly support Oregon’s federally recognized tribes in requesting \$900,000 to honor tribal sovereignty with the creation of an early learning hub.** This investment has been requested by tribal nations for years in government-to-government consultations and our view is that when tribal nations and BIPOC communities self-determine policy and budget priorities, it is important for policymakers to listen and act accordingly. This investment will provide essential infrastructure needed to honor government-to-government relationships focused on growing access to high quality culturally-specific early learning opportunities.

## The Early Childhood Equity Collaborative



<sup>1</sup> Gilliam et. al, “[Preschool Implicit Bias Policy Brief.](#)” Yale University Child Study Center (2016).

<sup>2</sup> [SRI International Research](#)