



March 29, 2021

RE: SB 5513 – ODE Grant in Aid Budget

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

Children ages 0-5 are the most racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse Oregonians, and they are the group of Oregonians most likely to live in poverty. Children born during the COVID-19 pandemic will be entering kindergarten just as we're climbing out of a recession, and decisions made during this session will influence the trajectory of their lives and Oregon's future.

To increase equity and access in our early childhood system and foster Oregon's short and long term economic recovery, we must serve more children and families with early childhood programs that are culturally relevant, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate. Oregon started to make progress with the Student Success Act. Even with these historic investments, most Oregon children who are eligible for services lack access. Federal stimulus dollars for early childhood are largely dedicated to child care, with \$39 billion in the American Rescue Plan. While these funds are essential, we still need the state to make progress on access to early learning and family support programs.

To continue Oregon's progress, this session **the Early Childhood Coalition is supporting a base of Current Service Level for all early care and education investments, including Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education, Oregon PreKindergarten Head Start, Preschool Promise, Early Childhood Equity Fund, Relief Nurseries, Healthy Families Oregon, Early Learning Hubs, parenting education, and professional development.**

In addition, we are supporting a package of \$127 million in investments to continue to increase access to the tens of thousands of children who are eligible but lack access to inclusive, culturally relevant, developmentally appropriate early care and education.

This package will:

- Prevent suspension and expulsion in early childhood programs with a \$5.8 million investment in professional support for educators.
- Begin the process to create a Tribal Early Learning Hub with \$900,000 in planning funds.
- Increase access to quality early learning for 7,000 children with a \$103.3 million investment (\$35.8 m for OPK, \$64.1 m for Preschool Promise, and \$3.4 m for Equity Fund)
- Provide wage parity for Relief Nursery staff with a \$4.8 million investment to reduce turnover and increase consistency for 3500 children served.
- Increase the number of families served and prepare for future growth in Healthy Families Oregon with a \$10 million investment in slots, wages, data, and staffing.

- Provide early access to books through medical clinics with a \$75,000 investment in Reach Out and Read.
- Expand access to parenting education with a \$2 million investment.

We must continue to make progress on investments in early childhood through the pandemic and recession because children's brains are rapidly developing. Before the age of 5, a child's brain makes one million new neural connections every second, with early experiences shaping brain architecture. This stage of complex neural, social, and emotional development makes early childhood a critical window in which to eliminate disparities.

Our Early Childhood Coalition 2021 legislative agenda is guided by the experiences of Black, Indigenous, and families of color, and families and providers historically excluded from policy and budget decisions. We ask legislators to commit to continued improvement in early care, education, and support for all of Oregon's young children and families and to center the voices of those most impacted by legislative actions in your decision-making processes.

Sincerely,

Children's Institute
Early Learning Multnomah
Early Learning Washington County/United Way of the Columbia-Willamette
Family Forward Oregon
Fight Crime: Invest in Kids
League of Women Voters of Oregon
Oregon Association of Relief Nurseries
Our Children Oregon
Prevent Child Abuse Oregon
ReadyNation
South-Central Early Learning Hub
United Way of the Columbia-Willamette
Washington County Department of Health and Human Services
Adelante Mujeres
Oregon Community Foundation
Marion & Polk Early Learning Hub
Nurse-Family Partnership
Education Explorers, LLC
Omolaso Preschool and Childcare
NW Early Learning Hub