



June 8, 2021

RE: SB 236 – Eliminating suspension and expulsion.

Dear Chair Smith Warner, Vice Chair Drazan, and members of the House Rules Committee,

The Early Childhood Coalition supports SB 236 to reduce and ultimately eliminate suspension and expulsion from early care and education programs across Oregon.

Young children, including infants and toddlers, are being suspended or expelled from early childhood programs, such as preschool or child care. National data shows that Black children, Native children, and children who experience disabilities are asked to leave at disproportionately higher rates than other children.

Young children and families that experience suspension and expulsion may carry a stigma beginning in these early years which continues through their education. Early care and education providers play a critical role in preventing this stigma. Without adequate professional support, providers may see suspension and expulsion as a last resort. Oregon must do better. We can support providers to include every child. Young children who are included in their classrooms can thrive and are more likely to be included in kindergarten classrooms and beyond.

SB 236 works with HB 2166 to marshal robust coaching and support for early care educators to have the tools to better support children in their programs, and ultimately moves us toward more inclusive child care and preschool settings across Oregon. In order to make progress on suspension and expulsion in early childhood, Oregon must:

- clearly define suspension and expulsion
- collect data for accountability and improvement
- support early childhood educators to build the skills that allow all children to thrive, such as anti-bias training and infant-toddler-early childhood mental health consultation
- ultimately commit to an end to suspension and expulsion by July 1, 2026

SB 236 and HB 2166 make progress on these essential steps. All children are born full of potential, yet young children who experience barriers to opportunity due to racism, classism, and other forms of discriminatory policy and practice are often denied access to proven programs and services that strengthen early learning and healthy development. 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.

We urge the passage of SB 236.

Sincerely,

Children's Institute
Education Explorers, LLC
Omolaso Preschool and Childcare
Multnomah County
Latino Network
Our Children Oregon
Adelante Mujeres
Alliance for Equity in Montessori Education
FACT Oregon
Early Learning Hub of Central Oregon
Fight Crime: Invest in Kids *Oregon*
ReadyNation *Oregon*
Metropolitan Family Service
Early Learning Multnomah
Oregon Pediatric Society
Eastern Oregon University Head Start
Oregon Community Foundation
League of Women Voters
Oregon Montessori Association
Nurse-Family Partnership