

To: Senate Labor & Business Committee

From: Kali Ladd, CEO, Children's Institute

Date: February 8, 2022

Re: Support for Future Ready package, SB 1545 and -2 amendment

Children's Institute is an early childhood advocacy organization that uses research, practice, policy and advocacy to shift systems toward justice for families so that all Oregon's children, birth to grade 5, have access to opportunity through high-quality early care and education programs.

Children's Institute supports SB 1545 because it is designed to increase equitable access to jobs that pay a family wage. Children thrive when their families thrive. Parents having equitable access to stable and living wage jobs that lift families out of poverty supports the healthy development of children.

Children and families also need inclusive, culturally relevant, and developmentally appropriate child care. We appreciate that child care is named as a key support families need to participate in job training and work.

Children's Institute supports the -2 amendment to SB 1545 because it creates some needed flexibility in Workforce Development Boards and Workforce Pathways efforts that can support the development of the child care workforce. This is paramount given that the child care workforce is in crisis and many Oregon counties are childcare deserts. **Child care is the work that allows all other work to happen.** The pandemic has resulted in a 27% decline in access to child care - exacerbating a shortage of child care that was already a problem for families and business.

To chart a course forward, Oregon needs accessible, equitable pathways for the child care workforce. Now is the time for Oregon's higher education and workforce systems to develop strategies to meet the growing need for skilled and diverse early learning and care providers across Oregon. This commitment to the child care workforce is essential to support parents and business - the workforce of today. It is also essential for the development of young children - our workforce of tomorrow.