



2/20/2023

Dear Chair Reynolds, Vice Chairs Nguyen and Scharf, and the House Early Childhood Committee:

On behalf of the Oregon Association of Relief Nurseries, I am writing in strong support of the HB 2504, HB 2991, and HB 3029. Specifically, HB 2504 directs the Department of Early Learning & Care to make improvements to the Oregon Registry Online (ORO) and HB 2991 takes a hard look at improving the professional development system. Relief Nursery staff working directly with children are required to enroll in ORO. It is essential that ORO, as the mandatory professional development and recognition system for people in the early education field, be **accessible and consistent**.

Significant barriers and challenges with the ORO system include inconsistency with step-level rankings, delayed responses, inaccessibility to necessary training, system navigation and paperwork, and prohibitive transcript translation costs. These challenges disproportionately affect bilingual applicants and negatively impact Relief Nurseries' ability to hire, retain and compensate diverse staff. Relief Nurseries value providing services that are culturally responsive and therefore 40% of our direct service staff have a first language other than English. This bill will help the network to be able to recruit and hire international bilingual staff.

Frequently, applicants or staff who have college degrees in the early childhood field are not given professional acknowledgement by the ORO system specifically because they received their education in a country of origin that is not English-speaking. This results in undue stress being placed upon staff who are actually highly skilled and knowledgeable. It can also result in lower pay rates or appear less desirable when applying for positions that require higher ORO step levels.

For the early childhood field to become more equitable, this issue must be addressed. This will increase outcomes for children and families and the professionals in the field.

Young children cannot wait for us to act, they need culturally responsive and competent staff to support their learning now, and professionals need equitable pathways to this important profession.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cara Copeland", is positioned above the typed name.

Cara Copeland, Executive Director
Oregon Association of Relief Nurseries