



**To:** The Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education

**From:** Justen Rainey, Oregon Head Start Association

**Re:** Support for House Bill 5013

**Date:** March 2, 2023

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Co-Chair Frederick, Co-Chair McLain, and Members of the Committee,

The Oregon Head Start Association strongly supports the key and critical investments proposed by Governor Kotek for early childhood and the Department of Early Learning and Care (DELIC).

These investments will provide significant opportunities for children, and their families across the state. We greatly appreciate the investments that are being made to help establish the newly created Department of Early Learning and Care and the work and collaboration of early childhood partners that would be funded in the proposed budget. Creating a system dedicated to improving outcomes from birth to 5 will have measurable results and benefits for many years to come. **The Oregon Head Start Association strongly supports the investments laid out by the Early Childhood Coalition.**

**The Oregon Head Start Association strongly supports \$390.9 million in funding for Early Head Start and Oregon Pre-Kindergarten programs.** The budget provides \$62.6 million for Early Head Start Programs and \$302.7 for the Oregon Pre-Kindergarten program.

Early Head Start provides early learning and comprehensive child development along with family support services to low-income families with children birth to 3 years of age. Programs serve families with full-day and full-year programs tailored to meet the needs of eligible families. Services include both center-based services in an early learning care and educational setting with home visits. The program also provides home-based services with weekly home visits for those parents who prefer that option. The proposed investment of \$62.6 million for this program is essential.

Oregon Pre-Kindergarten (OPK) is a state funded program that operates under the same guidelines as federal Head Start Programs. Head Start provides free pre-school for children ages 3-5. Programs support critical language, literacy, and emotional development, and are located in every county in Oregon. Head Start provides nutrition support, health care support, and prioritizes working with

families to help them stay engaged and involved in their child's education. Head Start's OPK programs provide children with a chance to begin public kindergarten well-adjusted and ready to learn.

Children eligible for Oregon Pre-Kindergarten come from families that earn less than 100 percent of federal poverty level, are currently homeless, in foster care or from families receiving TANF SSI benefits, or SNAP. Approximately 17,500 children are enrolled in federal or state Oregon Pre-Kindergarten programs. The proposed investment of \$302.7 million will help strengthen and stabilize a program that has operated in Oregon successfully since 1987.

Head Start programs face many of the same challenges that other non-profits and businesses do. Operating and building costs have significantly increased, and many Head Start programs don't have the classroom space needed to enroll more children. The Governor's recommended budget recognizes these challenges and provides policy option packages to help early learning programs, like Head Start, specifically address these challenges. We strongly support the early childhood stabilization package to help early learning providers address the cost of inflation, workforce shortage, and overall operation costs. **\$25.6 million is slated to support Head Start programs.**

To address the lack of classroom space, the Governor and legislature have prioritized several spending packages. The Oregon Head Start Association appreciates the efforts to prioritize funding for facilities. **Head Start programs strongly support the development of an Early Childhood Infrastructure Fund and an allocation of \$110 million** in funding for grants to eligible pre-school providers and programs. The early childhood infrastructure needs around the state are significant – and this investment would help address this critical need.

The Oregon Head Start Association also supports proposals to continue to provide LIFT funding to co-locate early learning space next to affordable housing under development. In 2021, there was \$10 million allocated to the Oregon Housing and Community Services for this program. The current budget recommends \$5 million. **The Oregon Head Start Association encourages investments of \$20 million in 2023.** We believe that agency has established the parameters of the program and are ready for a significant rollout and we have numerous locations that are already working with affordable housing providers and more that have expressed significant interest. We strongly believe money will go quickly. This will benefit more early learning programs, creating pre-school program at convenient locations to parents and children who benefit from our programs.

Best regards,



Justen Rainey  
Oregon Head Start Association  
Lobbyist