



To: The Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development

From: Justen Rainey, Oregon Head Start Association

Re: Support for Senate Bill 5511

Date: March 2, 2023

Co-Chair Woods, Co-Chair Gomberg, and Members of the Committee,

The Oregon Head Start Association strongly supports **\$20 million in LIFT funding for the co-location of early childhood classrooms at affordable housing developments.**

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.

SB 5511 provides a great opportunity to address the lack of classroom space for early childhood providers. The Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS) has partnered with the Department of Early Learning and Care (DELIC) to establish a framework to support the co-location of early childhood facilities and affordable housing developments. In 2021, the Oregon legislature provided an investment of \$10 million as part of HB 5011. Funding was set aside to provide these housing development projects with funds to maintain, improve, or build co-located early child care space onsite. The Oregon Head Start Association strongly supports the concept.

Space for early learning providers co-located in affordable housing helps address a need for space and increases access to early learning programs. Locating programs like Head Start where families reside helps provide more opportunities for Oregon families. Transportation can be a deterrent to families enrolling in programs. This concept provides critical pre-school programs at locations that are convenient and accessible for families. This model and previous investments by the Oregon legislature will address significant community needs.

Head Start programs have been working with affordable housing developers on several projects across the state. Affordable housing developers have been great partners in these projects. It is quickly becoming clear that more funding is needed to increase the number of projects so critical to adding space in locations that are easily accessible for Oregon families.

The Governor's budget recognizes this program as a long-term opportunity for new early childhood facilities. We appreciate her support for prioritizing facilities funding in her budget. The proposed \$5 million is to continue funding for the program that was established in 2021. **We are recommending an investment of \$20 million** for this program. We expect the first funds to roll out this year, and we know there are numerous projects ready to go that would co-locate early childhood classrooms in affordable housing developments.

If you have any questions regarding the Oregon Head Start Association's request, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Best regards,



Justen Rainey
Oregon Head Start Association
Lobbyist