

Thursday, March 2, 2023

RE: Department of Early Learning and Care Budget (HB 5013)

Distinguished Legislators,

Investments in early childhood are critical to support early brain development, health and wellbeing of children, families, and communities, and the broader economic wellbeing of our state. Oregon has made progress supporting families so children can reach their full potential. HB 5013 is the next step in this progress. As the legislature takes this historic step, the budget must make needed targeted investments in the early childhood workforce, expanding access to quality programs, and growing early childhood facilities infrastructure. In addition to the investments in HB 5013, we ask that the Ways & Means Subcommittee support investments in early childhood across agency budgets.

Specifically, in House Bill 5013, the Early Childhood Coalition supports these investments:

- **At least 10% increases above Current Service Level to all Early Learning Division programs** to better align with the true costs of providing these programs. A significant portion of these funds should go to increasing compensation for the skilled professionals, mostly women and women of color, who work with young children and families. We also support investments to pilot needed improvements to programs, including supporting inclusive practices to ensure children with disabilities and delays can fully participate; community transportation innovations; and extending school year programming into the summer.
- **A \$10 million increase to the Early Childhood Equity Fund** to increase access to effective culturally specific early learning services.
- **A \$35.5 million increase in programs that support families**, including:

- A \$21.1 million increase to Relief Nurseries to increase access to services that increase family resilience and prevent abuse and neglect of young children.
- A \$14.4 million increase to Healthy Families Oregon to support parents give their new babies the love and support they need to thrive.
- As close to **a \$250 million investment in child care subsidy** (Employment Related Day Care, ERDC) as possible. This investment is a needed critical step toward addressing Oregon’s child care crisis, support providers to offer quality care for children, ensure families can work and take care of their families, and support Oregon’s economy.
- At least **a \$100 million investment in early childhood facilities**. We recognize this investment is likely to be in another agency’s budget, but we ask Committee members to advocate for these investments, and ensure HB 5013 includes any resources the Department of Early Learning and Care may need to serve as a partner to those efforts.
- Finally, **the Department of Early Learning and Care must receive the resources, FTE, and tools they need to deliver these needed investments to communities**, where they make the greatest difference. It is essential that we set this agency up to succeed from the start.

All children are born full of potential, yet young children who experience barriers to opportunity due to race/ethnicity, income, geography, disability, language, immigrant and refugee status, houselessness and foster care often lack access to proven programs and services that strengthen early learning and healthy development. Public sector investments in young children can support all children to fulfill their potential, resulting in individual and societal benefits. This is critical, because a child’s brain makes one million new neural connections every second before the age of 5, with early experiences shaping brain architecture ([Harvard Center on the Developing Child](#)). Therefore, we urge you to make these needed investments in HB 5013.

Sincerely,

Adelante Mujeres
Alliance for Equity in Montessori
Albina Head Start
Children's Institute
FACT Oregon
Family Forward Oregon
Foundations for a Better Oregon
Fight Crime: Invest in Kids
Happy Go Lucky Child Care
Healthy Families Oregon Coalition
Immigrant and Refugee Community
Organization (IRCO)
Latino Network

Metropolitan Family Service
Nurse-Family Partnership
Oregon Association for the Education
of Young Children (ORAEYC)
Oregon Association of Relief Nurseries
Oregon Child Care Alliance
Oregon Early Learning Hub Association
Oregon Head Start Association
Oregon Montessori Association
Oregon Public Health Institute
Our Children Oregon
Reach Out & Read
Right from the Start