

Date: Thursday, March 2, 2023

To: Ways & Means Subcommittee on Transportation & Economic Development

From: Dana Hepper, Director of Policy & Advocacy, Children's Institute

RE: Oregon Housing & Community Services Budget (SB 5511)

Co-Chairs Woods and Gomberg, members of the Committee,

My name is Dana Hepper. I am the Director of Policy & Advocacy at the Children's Institute. Our vision is an Oregon where every child has the love, care and education they need. We have the joy of convening an Early Childhood Coalition, including more than 50 organizations across Oregon who serve and advocate for young children and their families.

Children's Institute and the Early Childhood Coalition support the inclusion of \$20 million for the co-location of affordable housing and child care in SB 5511.

Young children are born full of potential. Yet, children are more likely to live in poverty than any other age group ([US Census](#)). 113,000 children in Oregon live in poverty ([Kids Count](#)). 45,000 of these children are under the age of 6 ([Children's Defense Fund](#)). This means **Oregonians are most likely to live in poverty at exactly the same time their brains are experiencing the most rapid period of brain development**, making 1 million neural connections a second ([Harvard](#)). We can and must do better for children.

Housing and child care are typically a family's largest costs in their budget. Yet only 1 in 6 families who are eligible for child care assistance actually receive it. Housing isn't much better - only 1 in 5 families who are eligible for assistance receive support ([Center on Budget and Policy Priorities](#)).

Even when families actually receive a child care subsidy, many families are then unable to find a provider – because providers are full, don't offer the hours families need, aren't in the right location, or don't accept a voucher.

Many affordable housing providers have recognized this need, and explored the idea of co-locating child care with their housing developments. But they have quickly found that Oregon does not yet have in place a strategy for funding the child care facility piece of the project.

Thankfully, the Oregon Legislature has started an innovative approach to addressing these twin challenges facing families: dedicated funding for the co-location of affordable housing and child care. Oregon needs more child care facilities, and we need to make sure they are located near where people live (and work).

SB 5511 represents an opportunity to continue to invest in the potential of children and the stability and well-being of families. **We urge you to add \$20 million in this budget for the co-location of affordable housing and affordable child care,** which we expect to become a national model.

Thank you.