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COMMUNITY
ORGANIZATION

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March 3, 2023

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

The Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization (IRCO) would like to show our strong support for the CARE Co-location of Affordable Rental Housing and Early Care and Education (POP 114). Co-located affordable housing and preschool services are extremely impactful as it reduces equity barriers by infilling housing and child care shortages; and creating pathways to economic stability and growth for parents/caregivers. Studies have shown that co-located housing and child care are crucial in reducing barriers to continued and gainful employment for parents—especially mothers, early learning development, and kindergarten transition.

Every single county in Oregon is a “child care desert” with one child care slot for every three children ages 0-3 years old. Barriers to child care significantly impact the entire family from kindergarten readiness to parents unable to successfully get and retain a job. IRCO understands this impact firsthand and the need for state investment. In coordination with other local partners, we are developing co-located affordable housing and our first Multicultural Early Learning Center offering no cost tuition preschool services and wraparound services to both residents and preschool families.

We are also the only local culturally specific provider which has successfully piloted and implemented both home-based and center-based models for both immigrant and refugee communities. IRCO has provided technical assistance to 200+ home-based child care providers (all refugee women) for over 15 years and provided culturally specific preschool services for the past two and a half years. As child care providers and our participation in affordable housing development we have found the following issues around affordable housing and child care options 1) landlords are reluctant to approve home-based child care; 2) there is not enough affordable preschool space to rent without a significant capital startup to get it ready for use; 3) BOLI defines “child care” as commercial use ensuring most capital projects hit prevailing wage and significantly increasing costs for all parties involved.

We strongly encourage this full state investment of \$20 million to the CARE program, as it would ensure meeting the 30,000 more child care slots needed to meet base demand in combination with 600,000 new housing units by 2030.

We urge your support for continued and strong investments in this important program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lee Po Cha', is written over a white rectangular area.

Lee Po Cha
Executive Director