

Testimony to the Oregon House General Government Committee In Support of Senate Bill 858

Mar 7, 2023

Assembled by:

Elizabeth Gaines, Olivia Allen, Josh Weinstock, and Dan Whitaker, Children's Funding Project

Dear Chair Meek, Vice Chair Boquist, and Senators Findlay, Golden, and Jama:

Children's Funding Project is providing this testimony in support of Oregon Senate Bill 858. Children's Funding Project is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that helps communities and states close equity and opportunity gaps for children and youth through strategic public financing.

For every one child currently enrolled in critical afterschool or summer programs in Oregon, there are three waiting for an available slot. The low availability and high cost of quality early childhood, afterschool, and summer care for children are barriers that have been exacerbated over the past three years. Children's Funding Project has studied the high impact of Children's Service Districts in regions that have passed legislation similar to Senate Bill 858, and found that dedicated sources of public funding for children are popular and highly-effective mechanisms for ensuring all children get a strong start in life:

1. Children's Services Districts and other forms of local, voter approved children's funding have repeatedly proven to be a popular tool for improving child, youth, and family outcomes in diverse communities across the country. Nearly 50 cities, counties, and special districts across the country have pursued and passed local, dedicated funding for children's services through successful ballot measures. Public support has remained strong for these initiatives and **none have failed reauthorization on the ballot**. Additionally, the [Afterschool Alliance](#) reports that 90% of Oregonian parents support public funding for programs supporting children outside of school time.
2. Evidence indicates that this type of legislation has a positive effect on critical outcomes for children and families. Florida has created 12 Children's Services Councils (the equivalent of SB 858's proposed Children's Service District) and data shows that they are highly effective toward addressing local challenges. For example, since its establishment in 1986, the Children's Services Council of Palm Beach County has provided services that contributed to a decrease in the number of infants with low birth weights, a twenty-year low in the teen birth rate, and marked improvements in kindergarten readiness. Other Councils in Martin, Broward and Miami-Dade counties have pursued literacy initiatives and are now increasing the number of third graders reading proficiently at a pace faster than the state.
3. Children's Service Districts are uniquely positioned to quickly respond to crises and meet the specific needs of unique communities. Legislation that allows localities to establish Children's Service Districts was leveraged to respond to urgent community needs such as food insecurity and providing access and sustainability to strong networks of childcare providers during the COVID-19 pandemic. We also know that individual localities often face unique challenges. Importantly, Children's Service Districts provide flexibility that enables communities to swiftly respond to the needs of their own children and families.

Thank you for considering this important legislation to support the success of children and families in your local communities. Children's Funding Project is happy to provide additional assistance and answer any questions you may have as you move forward. For more information on the Children's Funding Project, visit: <https://www.childrensfundingproject.org/>