

Tuesday, March 14, 2023

**RE: Oregon Health Authority Budget (SB 5525)**

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. To continue this progress, the Oregon Health Authority budget must make needed targeted investments in the health and well-being of young children and their families. These early investments result in improved health outcomes long-term.

**Providing appropriate health care to children must be an intentional and explicit priority in Oregon and at the Oregon Health Authority** because more than 40% of children receive health care services funded by Medicaid ([Georgetown](#)); and nearly 40% of all people enrolled in public health insurance are children ([Medicaid.gov](#)). Medicaid provides insurance for the majority of children of color in our state – 60% of Black children, 65% of Latino children, and 57% of AI/AN children ([Georgetown](#)).

**To make children’s health a high priority in House Bill 5525, the Early Childhood Coalition supports these investments:**

- **An \$8 million investment in Nurse Family Partnership** to stabilize and expand effective home visiting services to families from pregnancy to a child’s 2nd birthday.
- **A \$1.5 million investment to establish a Child Health Policy Team** (POP 442) at the Oregon Health Authority. Children are not just small adults. Meeting children’s unique care needs requires specialized knowledge, actionable data and collaboration across agencies.

- **A \$1 million investment in Medicaid to fund the implementation of Early Periodic Screening Detection & Treatment (EPSDT)** (POP 414). EPDST is an essential funding mechanism to ensure that children receive appropriate physical, dental, developmental, and mental health services—from prevention to treatment.
- **A \$6 million investment in Universally Offered Nurse Home Visits (Family Connects)** (POP 425) to ensure this effective, early connection of families to services at a point of significant family change.
- **Ensure Oregon Health Authority is a full partner in the implementation of the Suspension Expulsion Prevention Program** at the Department of Early Learning & Care, especially to create accessible pathways to mental health consultants who have a strong grounding in child development and implicit bias.

**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 SB 5525.**

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  
 Multnomah County  
 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 Pediatric Society  
Oregon Public Health Institute  
Our Children Oregon  
Reach Out & Read  
Right from the Start  
ReadyNation  
Reimagine Oregon