

Date: Thursday, March 16, 2023

To: Senate Business & Labor Committee

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

RE: Increasing Available Care in Rural Communities (SB 1040)

Chair Taylor, Vice-Chair Bonham, and members of the Committee,

My name is Dana Hepper, and 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.

Oregon is facing a child care crisis. The entire state is a child care desert for infants and toddlers - meaning we have less than one child care space for every three children. Yet 60% of young children have all of their available parents working. This shortage is particularly acute in many rural counties ([Oregon State University](#)).

- Tillamook County has enough child care slots for 4% of infants and toddlers and 24% of preschoolers.
- Baker County has enough child care slots for 5% of infants and toddlers and 20% of preschoolers

Many Oregon counties have similarly dire statistics.

This crisis doesn't only impact children and families - it impacts entire communities and Oregon's economy. Child care is the work that supports all other work to happen. The Council for a Strong America estimates Oregon's infant-toddler child care crisis costs Oregon \$1.4 billion annually in lost earnings, productivity, and revenue ([CSA](#)). We appreciate the Senate Business & Labor Committee considering action on this issue.

Ultimately, the child care crisis requires action across expanding quality facilities, increasing access to quality & affordable care, and building a skilled & compensated child care workforce. This is complex work, and it requires Oregon moving forward simultaneously on multiple fronts.

We support SB 1040 -1 as an important component of this work to address the child care crisis, especially in rural communities. While traveling across Oregon, we have heard directly from child care providers and early learning and care system leaders about the unique challenges to establishing and expanding care in these communities. The specific challenges are diverse and warrant a thoughtful approach to test solutions that both support quality care for children and financial viability for small providers. This is exactly the approach SB 1040 takes, and we urge your support.

Thank you.