



Date: Wednesday, March 22, 2023

From: Chris Bennett, CEO & Co-Founder, Wonderschool

RE: Testimony for Senate Committee on Labor and Business On SB1040 -1

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

My name is Chris Bennett. As the CEO and Co-Founder of Wonderschool, as well as the beneficiary of in-home child care, I know firsthand the critical importance of quality child care for families and the community.

Wonderschool was founded with the mission to create an ecosystem that empowers early educators to build sustainable businesses and enables families to easily find high-quality child care. We have seen incredible demand and growth, which led us to grow from helping a few in-home providers in 2016 to thousands today. On average, in-home providers who we recruited and trained to use our tools earn 2-4 times more than other providers. During the COVID crisis, 97% of Wonderschool-backed programs remained open in 2020 compared to just 40% of non-Wonderschool programs.

Oregon, like many states, faces a child care crisis. Because all lasting solutions start with innate understanding, we need to conduct research to determine the true need within Oregon's rural and underserved communities and remove barriers to support the launch of in-home programs also known as micro-centers.

In-home child care providers offer a unique and valuable service to families in need of child care. These providers are often able to provide a more personalized and culturally responsive educational experience for children, as they operate in smaller settings and can tailor their curriculum to meet the needs of individual children. In addition, the startup costs and tuition fees for in-home child care are often lower than those of larger child care centers, making it a more efficient investment for states.

Furthermore, in-home child care providers have the flexibility to set their own schedules and work with a wider range of age groups, which allows for more flexibility in care and helps to fill the need for infant and toddler care. This is especially important for non-traditional hour working parents who face an uphill battle in finding affordable and high-quality care for their young children.

By piloting a project to remove barriers and support the launch of in-home programs, Oregon can create a blueprint for launching more affordable early child care and education that is uniquely designed to meet the state's needs. At Wonderschool, we believe that this approach can benefit all Oregonians, and we are committed to supporting the mission and innovation in the early child care industry.