Submitter: Suey Linzmeier

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means

Measure: SB5506

March 3, 2023

I write to you as the Executive Director of Head Start of Yamhill County (HSYC). Our program is also a member of the Oregon Head Start Association. Head Start of Yamhill County is funded by federal Early Head Start and Head Start funding, and Oregon funding for Oregon PreKindergarten services including preschool and (most recently) infants and toddlers and federal Maternal Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting funding that flows through OHA. We are funded to serve 470 children throughout Yamhill County in our non-profit that only provides Head Start/ Early Head Start for our community.

I strongly support critical investments needed to add classroom space and fund additional safe and quality space for early childhood facilities.   This includes an ask for funds to help co-locate early childhood classrooms or centers with affordable housing developments – as well as funds for grants overseen by Business Oregon to provide more funding for eligible pre-school programs.

Additionally, I support the governor's budget that provides $62.5 million for early learning enhancements to address the workforce shortage that providers like Head Start are facing, and $391 million for Early Head Start and OPK programs.

I have been in this field since 1980 and was able to educate Governor Kotek in our work and needs when she visited our McMinnville over winter break. Much of what was in her budget related to early learning was what I explained to her:

We offer prenatal-to-kindergarten services for children and families until they transition to kindergarten. Our population qualifies for services through homelessness, participation in foster care, participation in SNAP, and by income. Most families are at 100% of the federal poverty guidelines, which is an annual income of $30,000 for a family of 4. Families also qualify by risk factors including English as a Second Language, no high school diploma or GED, involvement in the childcare welfare or judicial systems, involvement in domestic violence, incarceration, and /or treatment or recovery for substance use disorder. We have a growing number of grandparents raising grandchildren in our program as well.

Our services are designed to meet the needs of our families: full-year and part-year, part-day and full-day.

Head Start-Early Head Start- Oregon-Prekindergarten programs have been funded the longest of all early childhood programs in Oregon. Ours are also the most successful ece programs and the ONLY programs who serve the whole child and the family comprehensively. We have data going back to the mid-1960s that illustrate our successes for both generations or participants and society. We hire and train parents as a priority. Every family with us sets self-sufficiency and parenting skills goals. We prevent and intervene when there are child neglect and abuse situations. We are the

primary community placements for young children in foster care and children with suspected or diagnosed disabilities.

The pandemic has negatively impacted our programs:

Staff left us because it was too hard juggle homeschooling and working. When it was time for them to return, the majority of our bilingual- bicultural staff were recruited by school districts as entry-level aides with sign-on bonuses, higher wages, and better health benefits. We struggle to recruit quality, qualified staff in our area because the wages are low and very few are interested in the field or child and family development.

Staff have left us as the work has grown exponentially harder. Last year 90% of our new preschool group (our "COVID babies') were not toilet trained. Most had never been separated from their families. The majority of those families experience mental health issues including depression, anxiety, and PTSD which, in turn, negatively impact their children's mental health, well-being, and behaviors. Many kids had never been up or down a slide and did not know how to turn the page in a book (swiping is what they knew). A