



Open letter to the Ways & Means Committee:

Oregon faces many crises right now, but the needs of our children should be an urgent priority in this legislative session. Investments in early childhood are among the most important investments we can make. And while Oregon has made progress in this area, we must continue to invest in and strengthen the opportunities we create for children and families across the state.

As you toured Oregon, you heard and saw the homelessness, addiction, and chronic disease experienced by too many of our neighbors. These are real challenges across our state. Oregon needs to be making far greater investments in preventing those from getting so bad in the first place. **This requires focusing on kids in a fundamentally different way.**

Consider these facts:

- One million neural connections are made per second in the first year of a child's life.
- The largest percentage of children in the child welfare system are children under the age of 5.
- The foundation for physical, mental, and emotional growth and development occur in the first 6 years of life.
- Of 23,000 Oregon children ages 0-5 on Medicare who have incarcerated parents, only 6 percent get the social emotional services they need

For many youth and adults, the roots of homelessness, addiction, and chronic disease start in the experiences, environment, and communities children experience prenatally through their early childhood. Our most cost-effective investments focus on prevention and target the earliest years of a child's life. As such, it was dismaying not to see children and the early childhood sector at the top of your priority list this session.

We have a short window of time, in the life of a human, to get things right and to chart a new course for the future of Oregon. If we are serious about ending addiction, homelessness, chronic disease and delinquency, it is irresponsible and negligent for us *not* to invest in strategies and actions that prioritize these earliest years.

Everywhere we travel around Oregon, communities elevate the needs of their children and the vital role the childcare sector plays in local economic development.

Improving K-12 education is necessary but not sufficient: we need to invest in these foundational years that catalyze brain growth while also bolstering a child care industry that creates jobs, provides small business opportunities for middle-class people, and enables parents of young children to work outside the home. The US Chamber of Commerce reinforces the essential nature of child care in our economy. Lack of child care costs businesses 20 percent of lost wages for hourly employees and 150 percent of lost wages for managers. The economic impact is sizable.

Community partners, in collaboration with the Governor and state agencies, have identified critical investments for this biennium to ensure Oregon is making headway to become the best place to be a child. **Progress requires that you make investments now in Oregon's early childhood workforce, facilities infrastructure, program stability, growth, and expansion, and early childhood mental and behavioral health.**

If we don't invest our limited dollars in our children, we will continue to set children on the wrong path from the beginning. Conversely, state investments in young children are a win for every Oregonian. The future of our state, of our society, depends on our children's early development. And our children are depending on you.

We urge your consideration of these priority investments in young children and their families in the 2023-25 biennium.

Sincerely,
Kali Thorne Ladd

2023 Early Childhood Coalition Budget Priorities

DEPARTMENT OF EARLY LEARNING & CARE (HB 5013)

Program	Investment needed	Stabilize services	Enhance Expand	Support workforce	Facilities	Health
**Early Childhood Equity Fund (POP 101 +)	\$10 million	Stabilize: \$2.5 million for wages, cost increases Enhance/ Expand: \$7.5 million for 1000+ children				
Relief Nurseries (POP 101 +)	\$21.1 million	Stabilize: \$5.3 million for wages, cost increases Enhance/Expand: \$15.8 million for 855+ children				
Healthy Families Oregon (POP 101 +)	\$14.4 million	Stabilize: \$7.5 million for wages, cost increases Enhance/Expand: \$6.9 million for reopening Lincoln Co, state staff, and database				
Employment Related Day Care (POP 102)	Up to \$250 million	Stabilize/Enhance/Expand: \$224 million to raise rates to reflect the cost of care and serve 3700 additional families. \$20 million to support family navigation. \$6 million for staff and technology updates.				
Preschool Promise (POP 101)	\$21.6 million	Stabilize: \$21.6 million for wages, cost increases				
Oregon Prenatal to Kindergarten (POP 101)	\$36.4 million	Stabilize: \$36.4 million for wages, cost increases				
**Early Childhood Workforce Pathways (HB 2991)	\$300,000	Workforce: \$300,000 to include providers in identifying challenges & pathway recommendations				
**Child Care Infrastructure Fund Technical Assistance (HB 3005)	\$10 million	Facilities: \$10 million to provide technical assistance to providers to access facilities funding				

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (HB 5014)

Program	Investment needed	Stabilize services	Enhance expand	Support workforce	Facilities	Health
Early Intervention/ Early Childhood Special Education (POP 105)	\$21 million	Enhance/Expand: \$21 million to provide recommended service level to all eligible children				

HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATING COMMISSION (HB 5025)

Program	Investment needed	Stabilize services	Enhance expand	Support workforce	Facilities	Health
Early Learning Scholarship Program (HB 3561, POP 302)	\$5.2 million	Workforce: \$5.2 million to provide scholarships to early learning & behavioral health providers				

OREGON BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT (SB 5524, HB 5030)

Program	Investment needed	Stabilize services	Enhance expand	Support workforce	Facilities	Health
<i>**Child Care Infrastructure Fund (HB 3005)</i>	\$100 million	Facilities: \$100 million to build, renovate, expand child care and preschool facilities across Oregon				

DEPARTMENT OF LAND CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT (HB 5027)

Program	Investment needed	Stabilize services	Enhance expand	Support workforce	Facilities	Health
Zoning, building codes, permitting impact on childcare (HB 2727)	\$220,000	Facilities: \$220 million to review challenges and promising practices in zoning, building codes, and permitting; make local & state recommendations				

OREGON HEALTH AUTHORITY (SB 5525)

Program	Investment needed	Stabilize services	Enhance expand	Support workforce	Facilities	Health
Nurse Family Partnership	\$8 million	Stabilize/Expand/Health: \$8 million to provide required federal match for any Oregon county				
EPSDT (POP 414)	\$1 million	Health: \$1 million to ensure children receive needed preventative and treatment health care				
Universally Offered Home Visits (POP 425)	\$6 million	Expand/Health: \$6 million to scale Family Connects to all Oregon counties				
Office of child health (POP 442)	\$1.5 million	Health: \$1.5 million to ensure child health policy experts analyze child-specific data and inform health policy				

OREGON HOUSING & COMMUNITY SERVICES

Program	Investment needed	Stabilize services	Enhance expand	Support workforce	Facilities	Health
Co-location of affordable housing & child care (POP 114)	\$20 million	Facilities: \$20 million for the CARE framework to support the co-location of housing & child care				

***Partners from Oregon's Early Childhood Coalition identified starred priorities as important for advancing racial equity and meeting the needs of the whole early childhood community.*