

Dear Members of the Committee,

My name is Caitlin Curtis and I work for Neighborhood House Head Start in SW Portland. Like many Early Childhood Education programs across the state, my school does not run year-round. While we are working towards being able to hold services for infants and toddlers year-round, we are not contracted with the state to serve Pre-K classes through the summer. This poses a challenge for the families that we serve, specifically families who are refugees, families whose income is below the poverty line and families with children who have differing development and abilities. There is a huge shortage of summer programming and programs that offer non-traditional hours that are outside of the normal 9-5 workday.

I had the pleasure of working with a family in the Winter and Spring of 2023, a grandmother who was caring for her 4-year-old grandchild with a developmental delay due to her mother's drug use while she was in the womb. This child did not understand stranger danger and was prone to exploring and eloping from the designated space she was being cared for in. This meant that her grandmother was not able to have her attend outside summer camps held in parks, summer programs that had large ratios where she might be overlooked, and there were really no options for her to feel safe sending her granddaughter. Not only did this cause a huge hardship for the family, but it delayed the child's ability to continue learning in a safe environment over the summer, missing critical opportunities for growth and development.

This story illustrates the immediate need to fund and create more options for families during the summer. We already know that Oregon is a childcare desert in every county, we already know that there are families who qualify for care but are not being served due to accessibility and availability issues. This must change if we are going to continue to support not only the children and families in our community but the economy and infrastructure of our communities on a grander scale.

I urge you to vote in favor of House Bill 4082, please help fund and support children getting the care they need during summer.

Thank you,

Caitlin Curtis

Education Coordinator

Neighborhood House Head Start

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