

**TO: House Education Committee**

**FROM: Dana Hepper, Children's Institute**

**DATE: Monday, February 5, 2024**

**RE: Support for Summer Learning Grant Program (HB 4082)**

Distinguished Legislators,

Immediate crises in housing and addiction are urgent, and much of this session will be spent on addressing these challenges. Yet the stories of Oregonians and decades of research tell us that these crises are often rooted in trauma combined with lack of support and opportunity for children when they are young. **In order for Oregon to have hope for a better future, we must invest in positive experiences for children.**

**Summer is a critical window to support positive childhood experiences, especially for young children who are transitioning to Kindergarten.** The summer before Kindergarten represents a significant transition for children and families into K-12 public education. Communities across Oregon are increasingly providing summer 'jump start' programs, allowing children with limited early learning opportunities to learn about their new school, new routines and structures, and become leaders among their peers. These programs are often built and operated collaboratively between school districts, Early Learning Hubs, and community partners. HB 4082 would support more predictable and adequate funding for summer programs transitioning children to Kindergarten.

**Summer is also a critical time to provide enrichment opportunities, tangible support, and continued learning.** Opportunity gaps by income open between birth and Kindergarten entry, where we lack universal early learning and care opportunities. Universal K-12 education starting at 5 years old prevents those opportunity gaps from growing wider, but we still see differences by income in access to opportunities after school and during the summer. All children, regardless of income, should have access to explore their interests, have access to needed food and a safe place to be, and further their learning.

**[Recent research](#) reinforces why Oregon must URGENTLY invest in effective programs with caring and trained adults that are embedded in communities to address persistent opportunity gaps.** We urge you to not let another summer go by

without investment in summer programming and the development of a long term plan for summer opportunities for children. **We urge your support for HB 4082 and a \$50 million investment for summer 2024.**