



Co-Chairs Girod and Holvey and Members of the Committee:

My name is Darcee Kilsdonk and I am the Executive Director at Clackamas County Children's Commission- a private, non-profit otherwise known as ClackCoKids.

I am here to appeal to you to support funding the Milwaukie Head Start capital construction request. This project should be prioritized to avoid the 76 children and families currently being served at the Wichita Center from losing services.

On December 20<sup>th</sup>, ClackCoKids received a letter from informing us that we would be losing the lease for the 5 classrooms we currently provide services out of at our Wichita site. We must vacate by June 30, 2024. The only and BEST option is to purchase and renovate the former YMCA building on Monroe St in Milwaukie. This site is ideal because it is zoned for childcare and was previously licensed. The building has been sitting empty since 2020 when the pandemic hit. ClackCoKids currently has an option to purchase this building, but it ends in March.

The community of Milwaukie continues to be the area with highest risk factors and the highest wait list in the county. For this reason, the loss of the Wichita site will affect the most vulnerable families in Clackamas County.

The total ask for this project is \$3.605 million which includes the purchase price of \$1.9 million and the \$1.705 million necessary to replace the roof and HVAC system, reconfigure classrooms to maximize use of space, update the kitchen, improve the playground for licensing and new paint and flooring throughout. Once funded, this project could open its doors to accept children and families within 9 months according to the architects, engineers and trade specialists who have examined the building and provided plans and cost estimates. We have done our homework and ClackCoKids has an architect ready to assist with creating the RFP for the project to get it out to bid in a timely manner, as well as contractors ready to bid and get it done!

The building has a 5-6 classroom capacity. The space will serve 86 children, so plenty of room for the children displaced at Wichita and an opportunity to serve more. ClackCoKids currently has the ongoing program funding to operate the space and we are just asking for these one-time funds to ensure we have a secure place to offer our services. Please consider funding this one-time request so ClackCoKids can continue to offer quality services to the most vulnerable children in Clackamas County. Time is of the essence. We will lose our space in June, and this would provide stability to provide services for decades to come.

Sincerely,

**Darcee Kilsdonk, MSW | Executive Director**  
**Clackamas County Children's Commission**

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