

February 7, 2025

To: Representative Zach Hudson, Chair,
House Committee on Higher Education and Workforce Development

I am writing to encourage you to support HB3011. As a former early childhood educator, and a current early childhood faculty member at Western Oregon University, I can easily speak to the dire need for funding for Oregon's early childhood workforce.

Our early childhood population of children from birth-school age and their families, is one of our most vulnerable populations. We need early childhood professionals who can provide a safe and caring environment through high-quality programs. Every day I work with future early childhood educators here at WOU who are either completing their student teaching, or are working in the field, and they need our support.

Our students want to go into this field because they love young children, value this work, and see it as an investment in our future. This bill will support Oregon's economic growth. Investing in early childhood is not rocket science, it is an investment in our economy and our society.

I recently overheard a conversation between two of my students. One of which, is what we would call a post-traditional learner, her first language is not English, she works and goes to school full-time, all while raising a family. The other student is one of our traditional undergraduate students. In response to how difficult this work is, I heard the traditional student say, "I am so tired. I am not sure if I can keep doing this." The post-traditional student responded, "We need you. We need all of us. I don't feel like I have a choice." They went on to discuss the need for highly qualified early educators who can create safe spaces for young children and families. The student went on to say, "If we don't do this, who will?" These are the people I want working with our young children, and they need our support.

Along with supporting Oregon's economic growth, this funding will support Oregon's higher education early childhood programs. Our universities and colleges have faced significant budget cuts over the years. HB 3011 will invest in publicly funded post-secondary early childhood degree programs and campus early childhood centers. We

need these funds so that we can build the workforce our young children and families deserve.

Your support for HB 3011 and the early childhood workforce ensures a brighter future for Oregon's children and families. It truly is an investment in our future.

Sincerely,



Cindy Ryan, Ed.D.
Chair, Division of Education and Leadership
Early Childhood Faculty
Western Oregon University
(503) 838-8605 ryanc@wou.edu