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Dear Chair Hudson and Members of the Committee:

I am writing in support of HB 3011. This important bill will serve many purposes, two of which I will expand upon here.

First, although child development research has shown that the ages of birth to three are the most vital in terms of the impact of high-quality experiences on children's lives and adult outcomes, we do not invest in these years as we invest in services for older children. This is a short sighted strategy which often leaves us trying to fix problems that could have been avoided if only we had acted earlier. HB 3011 will help address this situation by providing funds both for direct services to children through campus children's centers and by supporting early childhood educators who are learning about and providing children and families with high quality education and care.

Second, the financial supports that are offered to early childhood education college students in no way reflects how vital the work they do is. In an informal poll I conducted with my students, respondents reported paying for their college expenses primarily with student loans, out of their own wages, or through federal grants. Scholarship opportunities for students going into this field are few and scattered. When you consider that early care and education is one of the most poorly compensated career fields, any necessity to bear the burden of a college education takes a proportionately bigger toll on under-compensated teachers. HB 3011 would address this by providing programs funding that could be used to meet the needs of students, thereby reducing their financial burden. This more affordable access to higher education supports workforce development in both the short and long term, helping current students achieve their career goals and, through the high-quality education and care they provide, setting up the next generation to be ready to join the workforce in due time.

I urge you to support HB 3011 and demonstrate your commitment to Oregon's children and families, early childhood teachers, and higher education faculty, and through that support your commitment to the well-being of all of Oregon's citizens.

Sincerely,

Kate Puckett
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