

To: Ways and Means Committee

From: Bettina Hannigan

Date: 4/8/2025

Co-Chair Tawna D. Sanchez, Co-Chair Kate Lieber and members of the the Committee

My name is Bettina Hannigan, and I am honored to represent the Florence Area Chamber of Commerce and the businesses, families, and communities of Florence and the surrounding coastal region.

I am here today to emphasize the critical need for early childhood development centers on the Oregon Coast and to urge you to invest an additional \$500 million in the Employment Related Day Care (ERDC) Program through SB 5514, the Department of Early Learning and Care agency budget.

Our region is desperately underserved when it comes to child care. The Florence Childcare Taskforce has been working tirelessly to leverage every available resource, yet the lack of accessible, affordable, and high-quality child care remains one of our greatest economic and social challenges. Families across our community are struggling to find child care, forcing many parents—especially mothers—out of the workforce entirely. Businesses are suffering from staffing shortages as employees are unable to work due to the absence of reliable child care options.

This investment is not just about child care—it's about the future of our coastal economy. Without action, our ability to attract and retain a workforce, support local businesses, and sustain economic growth will remain severely hindered.

This funding will:

- ✔ Stabilize our fragile child care system and increase access for all families, regardless of income.
- ✔ Support working parents who are forced to make impossible choices between employment and caregiving.
- ✔ Strengthen small businesses and our local economy by ensuring employers can maintain a reliable workforce.
- ✔ Create job opportunities in early childhood education, helping to expand a much-needed workforce.

As a Chamber, we believe that thriving families create thriving communities, and child care is at the very heart of this. We urge you to invest the additional \$500 million into ERDC to ensure that every Oregon family—especially those in underserved rural and coastal areas—has access to quality, affordable child care.

Thank you for your time and commitment to supporting Oregon's children, families, and economy.

Bettina Hannigan, IOM

Chamber President and CEO
Florence Oregon