



Representative Lamar Wise
Oregon House District 48

HB 4057 - Early Childhood Education Streamlining

House Early Childhood and Human Services| February 3rd 2026 8:00 AM

Good afternoon Chair and members of the committee. For the record, I'm Representative Lamar Wise from SE Portland and North Clackamas..

I want to speak today not just about challenges in early learning, but what we've heard directly from providers, and how this bill responds in a focused, achievable way.

Across Oregon, families continue to struggle with access to affordable, reliable child care. Too often families remain on long ERDC waitlists, while at the same time, available child care and preschool slots sit unfilled because families aren't connected to the programs that could serve them. This is not just frustration, it's a lost opportunity for Oregon workers and employers alike. Recent research shows that only about one in three children under age five has access to a licensed child care slot, with infant care particularly scarce and costly. In some areas, lack of access is so severe it qualifies as a "child care desert."

Providers tell us the barriers are not because they don't want to serve families, they do, but because the system makes it harder than it needs to be. Families are routed through generalized hotlines without receiving consistent, statewide information about programs like Preschool Promise, Baby Promise, Head Start, and others that may have openings. Meanwhile, workforce challenges continue: educators face duplicative background check processes that delay hiring, destabilize classrooms, and reduce continuity for children.

We've taken this feedback seriously, and we have paired down this bill to focus on the highest-impact fixes providers consistently tell us will help. We are not expanding eligibility, raising spending, or asking for broad restructures. Instead, we're asking for targeted, actionable reviews of two specific components:

In Part 1 of the bill, we're standardizing referral information before families are directed to 211. This ensures families hear about all publicly funded early learning options, including Baby Promise and direct connections to Early Learning Hubs and CCR&Rs, so they can connect to care that already exists.

Part 2 of the bill, the workforce section, has been significantly pared down. Rather than rewriting all background check policies, we are directing the Oregon Department of Education, the Department of Early Learning and Care, and the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission to review duplicative background check requirements and identify what changes would allow Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) background checks to be accepted across systems. This would make it easier for child care providers to transition into school-based settings without redundant processes.

We've also built in a clear deadline because time matters. These agencies must submit their recommendations by January 2, 2027, in time for consideration in the 2027 legislative session. That structured timeline shows we want results, not delay.

This is a bill rooted in the real, day-to-day experiences of the providers I've talked to across Oregon. It reflects their desire to serve families and stay focused on children, not paperwork. It is modest in scope, strong in consensus, and designed to deliver measurable improvements without expanding eligibility or creating unfunded mandates.

Unlocking these barriers, better referrals and aligned background checks, means families find care faster, classrooms stay full, and educators spend more time teaching and less time waiting on administrative hurdles.

Thank you, and I welcome your questions