



Child Care That Works. For Every Family.

To: Senate Committee on Early Childhood and Behavioral Health
From: Child Care for Oregon
Date: February 24, 2026
RE: HB 4057

Chair Reynolds, Vice-Chair Anderson, and members of the Committee,

My name is Ivy Major-McDowall, and I'm the Care Advocacy Manager at For All Families Oregon (formerly Family Forward). I'm here on behalf of the Child Care for Oregon (CCFO) coalition—representing nonprofit organizations, labor unions, community advocates, parents, caregivers and providers working to build a comprehensive early learning and child care system in Oregon—in support of HB 4057.

I served on the Early Childhood Workgroup convened by the Child Care Caucus, where the ERDC program and its stagnant waitlist were elevated as a clear priority. What we keep hearing is that families seeking child care encounter too many barriers and entry points with inconsistent information, and that families on the waitlist are never told about other publicly funded options. HB 4057 is the beginning to improve that connection.

Accessing child care is a significant challenge for many families in Oregon. Finding a provider with an opening and affording care, which can cost more than the annual tuition of our public universities, are just two of the hurdles families face.¹ With nearly every county in Oregon being a child care desert for infants and toddlers, it's clear that we need to make every open slot count.²

The numbers are stark:

- 11,900 families are currently on the waitlist for our ERDC program.
- Another 16,108 families are enrolled in ERDC, but 4,000 of those families have not been connected to a provider.
- That's nearly 16,000 Oregon families who are eligible for child care assistance but are not getting it right now.

¹ OSU: [Early Care & Education Profile, State of Oregon 2024.](#)

² OSU: [Oregon's Child Care Desert Report 2024: Mapping Supply by Age Group & Percentage of Publicly Funded Slots.](#)

These numbers didn't happen overnight—in fact, our growing waitlist was avoidable. We as child care advocates have been telling lawmakers for years that ERDC wouldn't reach all eligible families if we didn't invest enough money. Now, the program is facing an estimated deficit of about \$88 million. Without legislative action, thousands of families could lose their ERDC vouchers that make going to work possible. This is a funding failure, and it demands an urgent response from the Legislature.

As we work to address the ERDC funding shortfall, we have an opportunity to strengthen how our early learning system currently serves our families. Even with adequate funding, our child care programs only work if families know they exist and can access them.

Families placed on the ERDC waitlist are navigating this complex system alone, unaware of their options. A parent waiting months for child care assistance doesn't know their four-year-old might qualify for Preschool Promise, or that their toddler could be in our Oregon Prenatal to Kindergarten (OPK) program. When families are screened by the Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS), they typically don't receive comprehensive information about other publicly funded early childhood programs they may be eligible for.

HB 4057 is a step in the right direction to address this information gap. This bill requires DELC to work with ODHS to provide standardized information to families they screen on all publicly funded early learning and care programs to families including: Baby Promise, Preschool Promise, OPK, Healthy Families Oregon, Early Learning Hubs, relief nurseries, and Head Start programs. It also ensures families know about resource and referral services, such as Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies, 211info, and the state's early learning website, that can help them navigate their options.

Currently, Preschool Promise is operating at 95% enrollment, which leaves about 200 slots available statewide. OPK through Head Start is at 93% enrollment, representing about 645 open slots. These are programs that work, programs that serve families well, and programs with some capacity to serve even more of our children.

HB 4057 is an opportunity to help families find these openings, but that's only possible if these programs remain funded and available. As the Legislature and this Committee considers how to address the broader budget challenges facing our state, protecting our investments in ERDC, Baby Promise, Preschool Promise, OPK, and early childhood programs becomes essential. When child care is already so hard to find and unaffordable, we cannot afford to reduce the slots we're currently providing.

If we do require DELC and ODHS to inform families about these programs systematically—and we should—then we need to ensure those programs are there when families call. These investments work together, and we are making progress. According to OSU’s 2024 Child Care Desert Report, 19 counties would be child care deserts for preschoolers without publicly funded slots.³ Adequate funding makes child care available and affordable, and standardized information helps families find them.

We urge the Committee to pass HB 4057 and protect the funding of early childhood programs that make a huge difference for our children’s healthy development and families’ economic stability.

In Solidarity,



³ OSU: [Oregon’s Child Care Desert Report 2024: Mapping Supply by Age Group & Percentage of Publicly Funded Slots](#).