



April 10, 2019

Joint Committee on Student Success
Oregon Legislature
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Co-Chairs Roblan, Smith-Warner and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Relief Nurseries across the state of Oregon serving over 2500 vulnerable families we want to thank you for your leadership in prioritizing investments for early childhood. Every day we interact with families struggling to provide a stable home environment for their children to grow and prepare them for a lifetime of learning. For 40 years we have seen that investing in families early pays off in how those future learners experience education and avoid traumatic foster care. We are grateful for your commitment to **invest \$5.6 million** to expand our current 31-site network to reach 9 new communities and maximize our current capacity, allowing us to serve more than **1000 additional children each biennium**. We again pledge to engage local communities in order to provide the 25% matching private revenue for this state investment.

We are committed to success of an array of early learning services that are partners with us in ensuring that together we [Raise Up Oregon](#). We depend on our home visiting partner **Healthy Families Oregon** to help us ensure children ages 0-3 get the kind of strong start that they deserve. Expanding both Relief Nurseries and Healthy Families together will ensure that in every corner of Oregon, babies and their families are learning together and developing patterns early that produce long term dividends in both learning and health. We hope you will consider the Governor's recommendation to expand this critical program.

Additionally, as our families stabilize and are able to seek sustainable employment, they are struggling to find quality childcare with their baby is not in our therapeutic classroom. Oregon's childcare desert does constitute a crisis for families and their communities. This means parents are forced to leave the workforce and quit their educational pursuits, which has compounding negative effects on their future earning potential. Many of our Relief Nurseries are piloting the **Baby Promise** initiatives currently being led by our Early Learning Division. An expanded investment of **\$10 million** will mean *every* hard-working family in Oregon will have the security of knowing their children are cared for in a rich environment with quality early childhood professionals.

Again, we thank you for partnering with us to ensure all children in Oregon thrive in safe, nurturing and stable families. Together we raise up Oregon!

Sincerely,

Cara J. Copeland, MS | Executive Director of the Oregon Association of Relief Nurseries