

To: House Human Services and Housing Committee
From: Dana Hepper, Director of Policy & Advocacy, Children's Institute
Date: Thursday, March 28, 2019
Re: Support for SB 543

Chair Keny-Guyer, Interim Chair Sanchez, and Members of the Committee,

The Children's Institute supports the passage of SB 543, authorizing the creation of children's special districts. The Children's Institute is dedicated to ensuring Oregon's young children are prepared for success in school and in life. We know these years provide the critical foundation for children's learning and development.

This bill would provide a mechanism whereby communities could locally fund programs and services for children and families who do not currently have access to proven programs in their community. The funding would open the door to children for effective programs that already exist but do not serve all children who need it. For example, across Oregon only 37% of low-income children have access to high quality preschool. Just 20% of families facing substantial risk factors have a trained home visitor available to provide proven parent coaching and support.

We know that children in poverty that participate in early childhood, after-school, and summer school programs are more likely to be successful in school and become contributing citizens in their communities. They are more likely to be able to have opportunities for adequate nutrition, which helps them do better in school. Children from low-income families who do not have the opportunity to participate in these programs are less likely to graduate high school and find long-term success in life.

We need this bill. Please provide communities with the opportunity to engage local voters in helping children succeed.

Sincerely,

Dana Hepper
Director of Policy & Advocacy