



Testimony in Support of the Summer Learning and Childcare Package
Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education

Speaker of the House Tina Kotek
March 15, 2021

Co-Chairs Frederick and McLain, members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of the Summer Learning and Child Care Package to support children and working families across Oregon.

We are at a pivotal, yet hopeful point in this pandemic. Vaccination rates are increasing. Our COVID-19 transmission and hospitalization rates have been improving following a difficult winter. And we will continue to see much-needed federal support following the passage and signing of the American Rescue Plan, which will be essential to our economic recovery.

We have the opportunity this summer to support our children and families in recovering from the educational and emotional losses of the past year living in a global pandemic.

We all know stories of the stress this last year has caused for our kids: more emotional distress, more depression, and more anxiety as routines have been upended. The challenges have been greater for low-income families, children with special needs, single-parent households, and communities of color disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.

Families desperately need this funding package for the summer. Many parents have had a full year of balancing full-time jobs with around-the-clock parenting to support distance learning or child care needs. It's not sustainable for another summer.

With students getting back into the classroom this spring, we must facilitate a fulfilling summer for kids and their parents. For the students and parents who are listening, I know many of you are ready for this and will need access to more activities. We are stepping up to encourage schools and community groups to meet the need.

This funding package, \$250 million in state general fund dollars coupled with an additional \$75 million in federal matching dollars, will provide:

- School-connected academic and enrichment programs for students of all ages;
- High school credit recovery for students who have fallen behind during distance learning;

- Wraparound child care support, including nutritional services, for K-8 students;
- Early learning programs; and
- Enrichment programs of all kinds across the state, such as day camps and park programs.

I would like to highlight briefly the proposed investments for our children who are 5 years old and younger.

The Early Learning Division (ELD) will offer additional programming through the Oregon Prekindergarten Program, Preschool Promise, and the Early Childhood Equity Fund for our youngest Oregonians. This funding will result in 2,900 summer slots for children from 0 to 5 years old - children in low-income families and those with the greatest needs - for 8 to 12 weeks of educational activities. The ELD will also be able to expand kindergarten transition programming to an additional 2,000 children and families statewide.

In this moment when historic federal investment is helping our state recover from the pandemic recession, the use of federal Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) funds will support the ongoing needs of the state's Employment Related Day Care Program (ERDC), helping eligible low-income families afford child care as the economy continues to reopen, as well as help child care providers who have struggled to stay in business.

In total, the ELD estimates this \$23.2 million state and federal funded investment will enable over 5,000 children from birth to 5 years of age to receive services through the summer months.

Colleagues, all across the state, our kids need the opportunity to be kids again. We need to be part of the solution to help families recover from the social and emotional trauma of the last year. Children are resilient. We need to act boldly and safely to facilitate their recovery after a year of social isolation.

Thank you.