

## Testimony to the Oregon Senate Finance and Revenue Committee In Support of Senate Bill 299

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Assembled by:

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Children's Funding Project (CFP) is providing this testimony in support of Oregon Senate Bill 299. CFP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that helps communities and states close equity and opportunity gaps for children and youth through strategic public financing.

Currently, there are 221,000 young people across Oregon who desire but lack access to afterschool programs. Oregon is also the fourth least affordable state when it comes to the cost of preschool. CFP has studied the creation and implementation of all of the Children's Services Districts in the U.S. and believes that they are highly-effective mechanisms for addressing these issues and more for the following reasons:

1. Children's Services Districts have repeatedly demonstrated their effectiveness as a tool for improving child, youth, and family outcomes in communities across the country. The 11 Children's Services Councils in Florida (Florida's equivalent to Oregon's proposed Children's Services Districts), for example, have clear data that shows the results of their work to combat some of the biggest challenges facing children and communities in this country. For example, since its establishment in 1986, the Children's Services Council of Palm Beach County has provided services that contributed to a decrease in the number of infants with low birth weights, a twenty-year low in the teen birth rate, and marked improvements in kindergarten readiness. Other Councils in Martin, Broward and Miami-Dade counties have pursued literacy initiatives and are now increasing the number of third graders reading proficiently at a pace faster than the state.
2. Children's Services Districts are uniquely positioned to quickly respond to crises, as demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic. By design, they have characteristics that allow them to fill in the cracks illuminated by an emergency, such as: strong networks of providers and families that allow quick assessment of critical need; agency to quickly redirect or direct funding to areas of critical need; and practice collaborating across systems (crucial during an emergency of this magnitude). For example, at the start of the pandemic, the governing board of the Children's Services Council of Broward County, FL designated a \$500,000 emergency fund and authority to the Council to fast-track grants to fill immediate needs such as food security (normally the board must approve each individual expenditure). Other Councils in the state were able to continue funding providers and programs to prevent worker furloughs.
3. Similar "children's funds" across the country are very popular with voters -- to date, over 45 cities, counties, and special districts have pursued and passed programs similar to Children's Services Districts, all by successful ballot measures. In 2020 alone, voters dedicated new funding to kids in Escambia and Leon Counties, FL; San Antonio, TX; St. Louis, MO; Cincinnati, OH; and Anchorage, AK. Not one has failed to be reauthorized by ballot.

Thank you for considering this important piece of legislation to support local communities and the success of their children and youth. Children's Funding Project would be happy to be of assistance and answer any questions about this movement around the country. For more information on the Children's Funding Project, visit: <https://www.childrensfundingproject.org/>