



NEIGHBORS FOR KIDS

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KIDS ZONE PROGRAMS:
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Summer Day Camp
Little Kids Zone Preschool
USDA Food
Music & Visual Arts
STEM Activities
CATCH Health & Sports
Teen Enrichment
Rowing Club & Surf Camp

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February 4, 2021

Re: Letter of Support for SB 299

Dear Members of the Oregon Senate Finance and Revenue Committee,

Chair Senator Ginny Burdick
Senators Brian Boquist, Lynn Findley, Rob Wagner, and Chuck Riley

I write on behalf of the Board of Directors, staff, and volunteers of Neighbors for Kids (NFK) in Depoe Bay, Oregon, urging you to enact SB 299. NFK is a 501(c)3 non-profit dedicated to supporting families in Lincoln County during out-of-school-hours by providing quality after-school and summer programs to pre-school and school-aged children in a safe, affordable, fun learning environment. NFK was created through a grassroots effort of community members standing against rising youth drug and alcohol use in their town by providing kids something fun and fulfilling to do after school. NFK celebrated its 20th Anniversary in 2019. Ours is a compelling story and why we so strongly support SB 299. Feel free to click on this link <https://neighborsforkids.org/our-story/> to learn more about NKF's history. Worth noting is that at the urging of our larger community, in 2018 NFK expanded to provide a daily preschool program from 8 am – 5:30 pm, with ½ day and full day slots available. It was very successful, until the pandemic hit.

The state's efforts to promote increased quality care and education services in the past have not had significant impact for children in Lincoln County. In 2015, Preschool Promise, a program to serve 3- and 4-year-olds living at or below 200% of the federal poverty threshold was passed by the legislature. Finally, five years later in November of 2020, Lincoln County was finally awarded 36 Preschool Promise slots that are distributed in four areas of the county in various provider settings; however, pandemic restrictions have severely impacted positive results. According to Children First for Oregon's 2020 County Data report on child well-being prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the percentage of Lincoln County children living in poverty was 20%, which is 5% higher than the statewide level. The percentage of 3- and 4-year-olds enrolled in preschool in Lincoln County was 27%, 18% lower than the statewide level.

Lincoln County has a very long history of a critical lack of quality infant/toddler care. Due to the loss of our local Child Care Resource and Referral in 2017 we do not have current statistics; however, anecdotal evidence demonstrates that the situation has only worsened. Only one certified center in our county provides care for infants and toddlers. All other infant and toddler care is dependent on family child care providers. Prior to the pandemic there was a limited number of providers willing or able to offer the number of slots needed to care for our families. Restrictions during the pandemic have only served to magnify this crisis for families. In the face of bleak statistics and current circumstances, our organization sees great hope for SB 299 to be a tool to provide local and sustainable long-term funding for the children's programs and services we so desperately need.

To provide context: In 1918 the second-ever OSU Extension office was founded in Lincoln County. In 1988, amidst fears that the county would no longer be able to fund Oregon State University's Extension Service office, Lincoln County citizens voted its support by establishing the Extension Service District. Due to that vote in 1988 it continues to serve the community today, changing the lives of people involved in it. OSU Extension hosted the local Child Care Resource and Referral in Lincoln County until the state forced changes in October 2017.

We are excited to have the opportunity to move forward with a Children's Services District to give local families the support they need – **the support that every child deserves**. NFK therefore urges you to vote yes on SB 299 to help Oregonians move the needle of equity and achievement upward for all children and families.

Sincerely,

Toby J. Winn, Executive Director of Development

Neighbors For Kids Board of Directors, Staff and Volunteers