

April 13, 2021

Dear Senator Betsy Johnson, Senator Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, Representative Rayfield and members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means:

Thank you for your continued leadership and commitment to prioritize investments toward ensuring quality early care and education for Oregon's still-developing future constituents and their families. Early Care begins with the investments Oregonians make to ensure the health of an expecting family, whether it be by birth, foster care, or adoption. Parents and caregivers have been faced with a host of challenges, worries, and fears about giving birth and supporting the children in their care. They have risen to the occasion with fortitude and resilience, without the support of traditional health care, home visitation, parenting education and support, childcare, Head Start, pre-kindergarten, K-12 schooling, and higher education while the pandemic brought loss and grief to many. These previously dependable supports were reimagined, through creativity, compassion, and grit, but it was not enough and will not be enough for children, families, and communities if we just stay the course.

Early care begins at home and is sustained and elevated through community-driven commitment to identify the needs of children and families, secure the resources, and respond to the voices and choices of those families. We will have to step-up our community planning, collaboration, integration, and implementation. Leaders in our legislature and the public at large have recognized pre-pandemic that "good is often not good enough." Oregonians supported the Student Success Act and their elected officials in expanded home visiting, parenting education, early learning, childcare, and state-funded pre-kindergarten opportunities, all with equity at the forefront.

Now is not the time to turn our backs on children, families, and communities, with a less than or maintain the status quo, investment strategy. I join the children, families, community partners and vast majority of passionate, driven Oregonians as we come together to urge the members of the Committee to rise to the occasion and align investments in the next biennium with the monumental response that is required to extinguish the inequities we have uncovered and rise above the challenges we have suffered. Good is certainly not good enough – we must invest robustly if we are to realize a healthy and thriving future Oregon. I trust in our shared commitment and action.

With gratitude and optimism,

Leslie Moguil, sr. program coordinator
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