

April 15, 2021

Senator Betsy Johnson, Co-Chair
Senator Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, Co-Chair
Representative Dan Rayfield, Co-Chair
Members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means

RE: SB 5555 Funding for Project Oasis – Yamhill County Childcare

Dear Committee Members:

As the regional economic development organization serving Oregon’s Mid-Willamette Valley, SEDCOR focuses our efforts on traded sector companies seeking to grow, expand, or locate in our region. We believe partner-supported, industry-driven solutions to community problems such as the lack of childcare resources for our region’s workforce, are key to community health and resiliency.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Yamhill County was identified as a childcare desert. Through the pandemic, this issue became more prevalent, with the greatest impact in our most rural communities, especially amongst working women/mothers, wage earners, and our BIPOC communities. One of the most significant traded sector industries in Yamhill County is dental equipment (parts & components) manufacturing. Dental Components Inc. (DCI) employs more than 250 local workers and identified lack of childcare as a significant obstacle to bringing back workers after COVID-related layoffs and recruiting new employees. They are only one of many traded sector business partners in our region who identified the same issue – specifically, women and wage-earning employees needed access to local, affordable childcare, to return to work.

We support Project Oasis as a workforce development initiative, an impactful public/private partnership, and a COVID-19 recovery program for working and underserved families. We believe this project meets the Governor’s principles for use of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds in the following ways:

1. **“Make big impact”** – This project aims to lessen the childcare desert in Yamhill county and support the returning workforce. Both points make a significant impact on our recovering economy.
2. **“Address disparities that were exacerbated by the pandemic”** – Women, BIPOC, rural, and wage-earning workers were all disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, including loss of employment and lack of ability to return to work for need of affordable childcare.

3. **“Make Oregon more resilient”** – It is important to use available funding today for meaningfully significant impacts. Shoring up the childcare desert by funding projects that will make long term impacts and have sustainable funding models for continued impact will lead to community and workforce resiliency, post-COVID.
4. **“Invest in programs where the pandemic has shown us there is a better way”** – The childcare system has been consistently identified as a shortfall in what can be called the “working family community infrastructure”, which this project aims to address.
5. **“These are one-time funds”** – Project Oasis is seeking capital funding to build out their facility. These one-time funds will support the launch by providing gap funding. This project has a sustainable program support model that will provide for future fiscal sustainability and, as a private led and community supported project, it will not have ongoing need for public funding or resources.
6. **“Public accountability and participation will be key”** – This project has received start-up funding from Yamhill County and the City of Newberg. The project has also been identified by Regional Solutions as a priority project, and the by the Yamhill County Economic Development Council as a priority area for workforce recovery.

SEDCOR and our partners support this project and believe this ARPA funding will make a significant impact to members of the workforce, and their families, in Yamhill County and the region. Ultimately, SEDCOR is committed to working with our public and private sector partners in the community to make certain that the most appropriate structure is in place to assist DCI and Project Oasis in managing the funding allocated to this important project to ensure success.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Erik Andersson', written in a cursive style.

Erik Andersson
President