

## EARLY CHILDHOOD EQUITY COLLABORATIVE

Testimony re: Pass SB 236 -7

June 9, 2021

Dear Chair Smith Warner, Vice-Chair Drazan, Vice-Chair Holvey, and members of the House Rules Committee,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Early Childhood Equity Collaborative, a coalition of culturally specific organizations with decades of experience providing early childhood services to children and families. **We urge you to pass SB 236 with the -7 amendment. The bill would prohibit suspension and expulsion in publicly funded early childhood preschools and child care facilities by 2026 – because 2, 3, and 4 year olds should not be excluded from learning opportunities because of their “behavior issues.”** This is about the system failing our children, not our babies and toddlers failing to follow rules. It is about the school to prison pipeline that starts before kindergarten.

**Our coalition is proud to be standing with Reimagine Oregon and the Early Childhood Coalition in support of the bill.** Nationally, nearly 9,000 children are suspended and expelled from their state-funded preschool programs each year. Black children are expelled from preschool classrooms at 3.6 times the rate of White children. Exclusionary practices have short- and long-term impacts on children’s health and well-being when their brains are early in their cognitive and social/emotional development.

While there are many demands for policy change and investments this legislative session, how can we as a State continue to say we are prioritizing equity and inclusion when we allow narratives to uphold practices that exclude young children from preschool and childcare? We need to stop thinking about children as problems and start thinking about children as human beings who are learning and developing - who are 700-1460 DAYS old. Exclusionary practices say more about the adults than they do about the children, and that means adults need support as well. We know this is a systemic problem that needs systemic solutions. We need to pass SB 236 to prohibit suspension and expulsion while also providing child care providers and early childhood educators with the coaching, professional development and support needed to keep children in the classroom, which HB 2166 addresses.

**Please vote yes on SB 236 -7 and send it to the House floor.**

Sincerely,

**The Early Childhood Equity Collaborative**

