



Oregon Pediatric Society

A Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. Incorporated in Oregon

DATE: February 16, 2021

TO: Senator Dembrow, Chair; Vice-Chair Thomsen; and Members of the Senate Committee on Education

FROM: Angela Zallen, MD, FAAP
Pediatric Hospitalist and Vice President of the Oregon Pediatric Society

SUBJECT: Support SB 236 – Studying Early Childhood Suspension and Expulsion

My name is Dr. Angela Zallen; I am a pediatric hospitalist in Springfield, Oregon, and the Vice President of the Oregon Pediatric Society. I am writing today representing the Oregon Pediatric Society to express my strong support for SB 236.

All children deserve a chance to learn and thrive in an environment that is equitable and supportive. Children can thrive in their early childhood educational environments when they are supported by trusted adults that value them and their well-being. Positive early childhood experiences can have a profound effect on the lives of children and their families. As a pediatrician and strong advocate for child health, I ask for your support in passing SB 236 so that we may work to limit and prevent the practice of suspension and expulsion in early childhood education.

I am not only a pediatrician who cares for children of all ages and backgrounds, but also a Mom of a preschool-age boy. As such, I was surprised to learn how common suspensions and expulsions are for children in preschool. These practices are not only harmful for the child, but do not address their underlying need for support, connection, and consistency. A significant amount of research has been done to show that children in preschool are three times more likely to be expelled from school than in any other grade from Kindergarten to 12th grade.¹ This can have significant effects on the self-esteem of these children, who are then less likely to excel in school and more likely to have poorer educational attainment.

In medicine and public health, a significant amount of attention has been paid in the last 10 years to the social determinants of health. Social determinants of health are the conditions surrounding where people are born, grow, live, work, play, and age. Education is a key social determinant of health. Suspension and expulsion in early



Oregon Pediatric Society

A Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. Incorporated in Oregon

childhood education adversely affects kids and their families, and it disproportionately affects children of color. “African American children are expelled almost twice as often as White or Latino children and more than five times as often as Asian American children.”² Boys are also four times as likely to be expelled as girls. This can drastically affect both the mental and physical health of children. This practice needs to stop.

Implicit bias is present in every field, including education and also in medicine. Bias as it relates to race can have a significant effect on the educational environment where children of color are more likely to receive harsher punishments than white children for the same behaviors. Equity is an issue that needs to be addressed along a person’s life course, and discrimination can start at birth. Children who have positive and supportive early education environments will do better, be healthier, and thrive. Addressing systemic inequity early in life can have long-lasting effects throughout a child’s lifespan. Please vote yes on SB 236.

References:

1. <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/understanding-eliminating-expulsion-early-childhood-factsheet.pdf>
2. <https://www.naeyc.org/standing-together-against-suspension-expulsion-early-childhood-resources>