



February 22, 2021

RE: HB 2503 – Expands eligibility for certain child care subsidy programs.

Dear Chair Power and members of the House Early Childhood Committee,

The Early Childhood Coalition is supporting HB 2503 to improve Oregon's child care subsidy program. Oregon's child care system as it currently exists does not meet the needs of children, parents, providers, or Oregon's economic recovery. The COVID-19 pandemic laid bare the crisis that has long existed in child care. Even before COVID-19, every county in Oregon was a child care desert for infants and toddlers. House Bill 2503 is critical legislation to putting Oregon on the right track.

The Early Childhood Coalition recognizes that all children are born full of potential. Yet young children who experience barriers to opportunity due to racism, classism, and other forms of discriminatory policy and practice are often denied access to proven programs and services that strengthen early learning and healthy development. There are disparities in access to developmentally appropriate, culturally relevant, and inclusive childcare. Before the age of 5, a child's brain makes one million new neural connections every second, with early experiences shaping brain architecture. This stage of complex neural, social, and emotional development makes early childhood a critical window in which to eliminate disparities.

Oregon's current child care system is not built to eliminate disparities; it exacerbates existing disparities. Families can't afford child care, even when they do qualify for a subsidy. Child care providers, who are disproportionately women, and Black, Indigenous, people of color, and immigrants, earn less than \$12 per hour. And many children experience unstable care due to high turnover in the field and a child care system that doesn't meet their family's needs.

HB 2503 proposes important changes to child care subsidy to build a program that will work better for children, families, and providers. These changes include:

- Making care more affordable for families by ensuring co-pays don't exceed 7%
- Expanding eligibility to children regardless of documentation status and for the multiple reasons parents are unavailable to provide care
- Ensuring children have access to more stable care with eligibility extending for a minimum of 12 months
- Making sure providers have more stable and adequate funding to provide developmentally appropriate, culturally responsive, and inclusive care

We urge your support of HB 2503.

Sincerely,

Children's Institute
Family Forward Oregon
Multnomah County
Our Children Oregon
Alliance for Equity in Montessori Education
Nurse-Family Partnership
South Coast Regional Early Learning Hub
Early Learning Hub of Central Oregon
Fight Crime: Invest in Kids *Oregon*
ReadyNation *Oregon*
Coalition of Communities of Color
Metropolitan Family Service