

EARLY CHILDHOOD EQUITY COLLABORATIVE

Testimony re: SB 236 – Eliminating suspension and expulsion

February 24, 2021

Dear Chair Dembrow and members of the Senate Education Committee,

The Early Childhood Equity Collaborative is a coalition of community-based organizations with decades of experience providing culturally-specific services and programs to children and families. We urge your support of SB 236 to reduce and ultimately eliminate suspension and expulsion from early care and education programs across Oregon. This bill is aligned with the foundational work of Reimagine Oregon's education agenda focused on ending the pipeline to prison.

We know that systemic inequities are fueled by conscious and unconscious bias that results in the disproportionate suspension and expulsion of young children in early childhood settings. Here are the facts:

- Nearly 9,000 children are suspended and expelled from their state-funded preschool programs each year.¹
- Black children are expelled from preschool classrooms at 3.6 times the rate of White children.²
- While there is relatively little research that explains this disproportionality in early childhood, parallel studies regarding disproportionate “push-out” in K-12 settings suggest implicit bias, inconsistent use of policies, inadequate support for educators, and under-resourced programs are often associated with discipline disparities³.

Our organizations were recently involved with a series of focus groups with nearly 200 parents and early learning professionals about preschool. The findings affirmed that preschool exclusion (via suspension and expulsion) is a common issue among parents of color and parents with children experiencing learning delays and disabilities.⁴ Parents are often surprised by preschool or child care provider requests to not send their child back to school. To prevent exclusion, parents want providers to have the resources and support they need to keep children in the classroom. In addition, parents want to receive proactive, immediate communication from providers when behavior challenges arise. This communication is critical to building trust that their child is in a high-quality environment.

As our state builds on the needed infrastructure for our early childhood systems to close racial disparities, we need to ensure that early childhood professionals reflect the diversity of Oregon's children and families, and have access to robust coaching and support. SB 236 begins to create the conditions in which these educators are provided with the resources and tools that they need to feel empowered to keep young children in the classroom.

We urge the passage of SB 236.

Sincerely,

The Early Childhood Equity Collaborative



¹[Standing Together Against Suspension and Expulsion in Early Childhood.](#)

² Gilliam et. al, [“Preschool Implicit Bias Policy Brief,”](#) Yale University Child Study Center (2016).

³ [SRI International Research](#)

⁴ [Preschool for All: Translating Equity-Driven Policy Into Practice](#)