



# Oregon Pediatric Society

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

February 1, 2022

TO: The Honorable Rep. Power, Chair  
Members of the House Committee on Early Childhood

FROM: Sherri L. Alderman, MD, MPH, IMHM-E, FAAP  
Act Early Ambassador to Oregon, and representing the Oregon Pediatric Society

SUBJECT: Support for House Bill 4005 and the Child Care Emergency Response Package

Dear Committee on Early Childhood,

The Oregon Pediatric Society (OPS) is the state chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. Our membership is committed to improving and protecting the health and well-being of all children in Oregon, as well as supporting those who care for them. OPS strongly supports HB 4005 and the \$100M child care investment package, which would assure that working parents have access to child care services and the essential workers providing those services will be highly skilled and appropriately paid. I am a Developmental Behavioral Pediatrician with infant mental health endorsement at the highest level and a member of the OPS Board. I have more than 20 years of experience serving families and over 10 years of experience providing trainings to early care and education professionals.

There are three main reasons for passing HB 4005 and the child care budget investments:

1. Working families with infants and young children must have access to child care in order to provide for their family and contribute to the economy.
2. Infants and young children benefit from high quality child care that promotes healthy development and builds resilience during a time in their lives of most rapid brain growth.
3. Child care essential workers must be appropriately trained and compensated for their critical role of nurturing our youngest Oregonians.

In my clinical service for families with infants and young children, I have seen and heard stories about how families struggle to find affordable and quality child care that meets the needs of their children while adults are at work. Pre-COVID, Oregon was already in a child care crisis with every county in the state declared a 'child care desert.' There was only one available child care slot for every eight children needing such services. With COVID there was a drastic decline in child care services that persists to the current day; child care availability in Oregon remains 20% below the paucity of pre-COVID slots.

In a little one's brain, neurons are growing at 250,000 cells per minute. That growth is exquisitely sensitive to environment, for good or bad. What direction that early growth takes sets the infant or young child on a path that will impact social, emotional, and cognitive development; academic



# Oregon Pediatric Society

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

performance; life-long physical and mental health; productivity; and fulfillment. Optimal brain growth will only be fully achieved when surrounded by safe, caring adults. When a parent is at work, that adult is the child care provider.

COVID has spotlighted the critical role that child care professionals have as essential workers. Parents can return to work with greater peace of mind when their child care needs are met. Infants and young children can continue their path toward healthy brain development with nurturing adults and thrive when under the care of skilled, emotionally available child care providers.

In my contact with early care and education professionals, I have seen, first hand, the remarkable dedication child care providers have to nurture infants' and young children's early brain development and to be emotionally available for that child when their parents are at work. In contrast, child care professionals are woefully compensated for the vital role they play in the lives of young children and their community's economy. Often, they are parents themselves, and more commonly mothers. Pay is so low that they may qualify for social supports including food stamps in order to feed their own children. Economic stresses that the underpaid child care workforce endures can impede them from being able to provide child care services, reducing society's whole capacity. Appropriately compensated child care providers build community resilience. Increasing subsidy rates to 90% of the child care market rate recognizes the value of child care providers and adequately compensates them for the contributions they make to the health and well-being of infants, children, and families in their communities.

I have seen in my work how eager child care providers are to advance their professional skills. Trainings, consultation, and coaching create a child care environment filled with early childhood expertise that promotes optimal infant and early childhood development. Achieving a skilled child care workforce requires a State commitment to funding professional development opportunities for the early care and education workforce. Funding that advances the highly specialized skills required for promoting optimal brain development is an investment advancing kindergarten readiness, academic success, a healthy population, future productive workforce, and resilience in communities across the state.

In summary, parents want access to child care in order to work; infants and young children thrive when in a high-quality learning environment with nurturing adults; and child care providers are essential workers whose contributions to the community must be meaningfully recognized, advanced, and compensated. HB 4005 can turn the tide on the adverse impact COVID has had on early brain development and, moving ahead, assure the physical, mental, and developmental health of infants and young children, advance the child care professional capacity, and provide a smooth path for parents to get back to work.

OPS urges the committee to vote yes on HB 4005. I remain available for questions and/or further information and can be reached at [info@oraap.org](mailto:info@oraap.org). Thank you very much for your consideration.