

Tuesday, February 21, 2023

RE: Create equitable early childhood workforce pathways (HB 2991)

Distinguished Legislators,

Investments in early childhood are critical to support early brain development, health and wellbeing of children, families, and communities, and the broader economic wellbeing of our state. Oregon has made progress supporting families so children can reach their full potential. This progress reflects a promise to build a strong early learning and care system that is aligned and connected across partner agencies. To build an early childhood system that works for every Oregon child and family, legislators must take action this session to expand early childhood facilities infrastructure, create accessible workforce pathways, strengthen behavioral health, and reach more children and families with quality early learning and care.

House Bill 2991 is an important step to support Oregon's early childhood workforce.

This legislation will require the Department of Early Learning and Care to work with community stakeholders to build clear, accessible early childhood workforce pathways. This is an important step to building Oregon's supply of quality, culturally appropriate and responsive, inclusive child care across our state.

Supporting the early childhood workforce is critical because:

- Child care providers (who are disproportionately Black, Indigenous, and women of color) are among the lowest-paid workers in Oregon. In 2018, the median wage of preschool teachers, many of whom are college-educated, was \$13.95 an hour, and was \$11.86 for child care workers in Oregon. Average annual wages in child care are [about half the all-industry Oregon average](#).
- 81% of rural communities in Oregon are designated as child care deserts--meaning *at most* those [counties only have available slots for a third of the children who live there](#). We must create accessible pathways in every corner of the state to solve this crisis.

- [Working parents account for 31% of our labor force](#). If a third of our state can't consistently and reliably show up to work, we're in big trouble. In fact, due to employee child care issues, businesses nationally lose \$3 billion in revenue annually [according to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce](#).

HB 2991 will remove unnecessary barriers to professional credentials through our state's Online Registry System (ORO) by addressing issues such as an overly burdensome credentialing process and a lack of linguistically-diverse access. Early Childhood Coalition partners urge your support.

Sincerely,

Adelante Mujeres
 Alliance for Equity in Montessori
 Education Explorers
 Albina Head Start
 Child Care for Oregon
 Children's Institute
 FACT Oregon
 Family Forward Oregon
 Foundations for a Better Oregon
 Fight Crime: Invest in Kids
 Happy Go Lucky Child Care
 Healthy Families Oregon Coalition
 Immigrant and Refugee Community
 Organization (IRCO)
 KairosPDX
 Latino Network
 Metropolitan Family Service
 Multnomah County

Nurse-Family Partnership
 Oregon Association for the Education
 of Young Children (ORAEYC)
 Oregon Child Care Alliance
 Oregon Early Learning Hub Association
 Oregon Head Start Association
 Oregon Montessori Association
 Oregon Community Foundation
 Oregon Public Health Institute
 Oregon Association of Relief Nurseries
 Our Children Oregon
 Reach Out & Read
 ReadyNation
 Reimagine Oregon
 Right from the Start
 SVP Portland