



KairosPDX

Testimony in Support of HB 5013
to the Joint Committee on Ways & Means Education Subcommittee
Marsha Williams, CEO, KairosPDX

March 2, 2023

Co-Chairs Senator Frederick, Representative McClain, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 5013. My name is Marsha Williams and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of KairosPDX, a Portland-based nonprofit organization dedicated to eliminating the prolific racial achievement and opportunity gaps for Black children and their families. We operate an Early Learning Academy, a K-5 Learning Academy, and an adult Training Academy.

We are writing to offer support for HB 5013 as the Legislature continues to make investments in early childhood that impact Black children in Oregon. In partnership with Preschool For All, KairosPDX's Early Learning Academy is a pilot site for Multnomah County's universal preschool initiative. It is offered at no cost to families. We are creating a new narrative around children and families of color placing strength and excellence at the fore.

- As a member of the Early Childhood Coalition, we strongly support additional investments in Oregon's early childhood workforce, facilities infrastructure, and increasing access to culturally-specific programs like our own, including increasing funding for the Early Childhood Equity Fund.
- Culturally-specific early childhood programs are vital to addressing the specific needs of Black children who have been historically (and presently) underserved in Oregon.
- State investments in young children are a win for every Oregonian. They support brain development of young children, and they strengthen the health and well-being of children, families, communities, and our economy.
- It is critical that this budget makes needed investments in Oregon's early learning and care workforce. We have to compensate these professionals in alignment with the value they bring to our society - including both pay and benefits.
 - As we expand our reach to more children, we must expand our reach to recruit and retain culturally representative staff with competitive wages and benefits. At

KairosPDX, our work is rooted in trusting relationships. We use a community-centered worldview to inform our initiatives and programs.

- Our culturally representative staff have faced many of the same obstacles as those we serve, and offer our students and families a deep and shared understanding of how it feels to live in Black skin.
- The Department of Early Learning and Care must receive the resources, FTE, and tools they need to deliver these needed investments to communities, where they make the greatest difference. It is essential that we set this agency up to succeed from the start.

As the legislature takes this historic step, the budget must make needed targeted investments in the early childhood workforce, expanding access to quality programs, and growing early childhood facilities infrastructure. In addition to the investments in HB 5013, we ask that the Ways & Means Subcommittee support investments in early childhood across agency budgets.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marsha". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Marsha Williams, CEO
KairosPDX