

DATE: 13 March 2023

TO: House Higher Education Committee
Representative John Lively, Chair

RE: Support of HB 3561, early care and education workforce

As Early Care and Education professionals at institutions of public education throughout the state of Oregon, we appreciate the opportunity to express our support of HB 3561.

The state of Oregon, as are all states across our country, is in an early care and education (ECE) crisis: a crisis of not enough qualified ECE professionals, a capacity crisis of universally accessible quality ECE, a crisis for our working families and their financial health and wellbeing, and a crisis for the vitality of our communities from both a family health standpoint and an economic standpoint. And, at the center of this crisis are Oregon's infants, toddlers and preschoolers in need of quality care. Children are depending on us to ensure that they are receiving **quality** early care and education that makes good on the promise of their potential.

If approved and enacted without delay, House Bill 3561 will immediately address the ECE workforce crisis by directing funds and resources to those who are committed to building capacity through high quality care for children. The ECE workforce crisis immediately impacts our ability to create increased center-based quality early care and education. The tremendous ECE capacity shortfall cannot be solved by building up family providers only. We desperately need increased center-based capacity – an endeavor that is significantly financially challenged. Universities and community colleges are part of the solution in increasing center-based capacity.

House Bill 3561 also addresses the even larger potential crisis of a shortfall of highly qualified diverse professionals fielding other careers in support of Oregon's children and families. The ECE workforce is a pipeline for careers in fields such as elementary education, child and family law, early intervention/early childhood special education, behavioral and health services, pediatricians, academia, nursing, etc. Many professionals whose careers orbit in some way around children and families started their careers in early care and education programs.

House Bill 3561 clearly illustrates the need to build a qualified ECE workforce through investments in higher education. In addition to investing in students pursuing ECE related degrees, we must invest in our campus ECE academic programs and operations. Without quality ECE centers in which ECE students practice and learn their craft, just as elementary education students practice and learn their craft in our public elementary schools, we have only half of the necessary infrastructure to support a rising qualified workforce. Additionally, when

we invest in campus ECE operations, we create highly visible career oriented, professionally compensated positions. Our field is in need of a public relations campaign that counters the longstanding bias against this field, and the historically low professional status and compensation.

We support House Bill 3561 and, sincerely request expanded addressment of this crisis through watershed investments in Oregon's publicly funded post-secondary ECE academic programs and operations.

Signed,

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- Amy Howell, Ph.D., Early Childhood Education, Central Oregon Community College
- Oscar Juarez, M.Ed., Early Childhood Education, Oregon Coast Community College
- Trudy Van Dusen Citovic, Board of Education, Clatsop Community College
- Kate Puckett, PhD, Assistant Professor, Early Childhood Education, Eastern Oregon University
- Lynn Green, Director, Helen Gordon Child Development Center, Portland State University
- Michelle Domingues, Ed.D, Early Childhood Education, Columbia Gorge Community College
- Kathleen Lloyd, Ph.D., Early Childhood Education Coordinator & Faculty, Lane Community College
- Shannon Lipscomb, Ph.D., Director of Research and Associate Professor of Human Development and Family Sciences, Oregon State University-Cascades
- Bridget Hatfield, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Human Development and Family Sciences, Oregon State University
- Rachel Jefferson, BA, Elementary Education, Executive Director, Co-op Family Center, University of Oregon
- Melissa Batchelor, Ed.D., Associate Dean of Academic Affairs, Oregon Coast Community College
- Tammy Short, M.S Ed., Director, Early Childhood Education & Education, Blue Mountain Community College