



March 20, 2023

TO: House Committee on Early Childhood & Human Services
FROM: Our Children Oregon, The Children's Agenda
RE: Support for HB 3027

Dear Chair Reynolds, Vice-Chairs Nguyen and Scharf, and Members of the Committee,

Our Children Oregon (OCO) is a statewide organization that advances equitable policies, data and research, and whole-child advocacy. The Children's Agenda, convened by OCO, brings together ~127 organizations statewide to create a holistic legislative agenda dedicated to improving the well-being of Oregon's children, youth, and families. Our collective created a 2023 legislative agenda that focuses on community-driven solutions to provide access and opportunities for all children and families. **This year, investing in early childhood and child care is a top priority of the 2023 Children's Agenda. We strongly urge your support of HB 3027-2.**

Oregon has made significant strides in improving the lives of children, including making much-needed investments in early childhood and child care. **However, far too many Oregon parents and caregivers are confronting daily struggles with balancing care for their children while maintaining a job.** The industry continues to be marked by ongoing challenges like ever-increasing demand, rising costs of care, and disproportionate and pervasive racial and regional disparities in both access and affordability.

- Every county in Oregon is a child care desert, meaning that there are not enough child care slots for the number of children eligible for care.¹
- Only 1 out of 3 children in low-income families have access to publicly funded preschool, leaving nearly 30,000 children without access to preschool before they start kindergarten.²
- The average Oregon family spends 30% of their monthly income on child care.³

Research shows that families are able to work and earn more overall when public funds help to cover costs of care. Yet families continue to face significant barriers to accessing these subsidies. Many do not know they're eligible or cannot access them due to the disjointed access, applications, and eligibility processes. While Employment Related Day Care (ERDC) and Baby Promise are currently accessible through the ONE Eligibility System, other programs such as Preschool Promise, Head Start, or Oregon Pre-K are accessed through Early Learning Hubs and local programs. HB 3027-2 establishes a workgroup to report a plan to create a

¹ <https://ourchildrenoregon.org/publications/oregons-child-care-conundrum-hurdles-disparities-and-opportunities-amidst-the-covid-19-pandemic/>

² <https://childinst.org/policyresources/>

³ <https://ourchildrenoregon.org/publications/oregons-child-care-conundrum-hurdles-disparities-and-opportunities-amidst-the-covid-19-pandemic/>

“one-door” experience for families needing to access child care in Oregon. Included in that vision is implementing community-based child care navigators who, in coordination with DELC, CCRRs, and HUBS, can reach out to eligible families, assist with applications, process eligibility, and connect families with providers.

Unstable access to child care has significant emotional and financial implications for both children and caregivers. HB 3027-2 will make it easier for eligible families to access the care they need. We thank you for your time and efforts to improve child well-being across the state, and we urge your support of HB 3027-2.

From the Our Children Oregon Team,

Ivy Major-McDowall, Policy and Advocacy Director

Jenifer Wagley, Executive Director

View the 2023 Children’s Agenda at www.ourchildrenoregon.org/2023-childrens-agenda