

Submitter: Katie Smithson
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure: SB5506

Written testimony from a Head Start teacher.

Please consider allocating a portion of the Oregon budget to supporting preschool teachers who work in Head Start. Covid has drastically changed the behaviors of children we are seeing coming into the schools and it has been a huge struggle to keep staffed. These little kiddos coming into pre-school are covid babies who never got to have a chance to have social encounters and are severely lacking in their emotional regulation skills. Teachers are being hit, spit on, kicked, bitten, and screamed at daily. We are overwhelmed. Add to the behaviors the fact that we are unable to keep fully staffed because the pay isn't worth it to be abused in this way. We prepare these kiddos for two years to be ready for kindergarten, and yet we are only paid a fraction of what kindergarten teachers are paid. We need equal or higher pay.

Head Start programs face many of the same challenges that other non-profits and businesses

do. Operating and building costs have significantly increased, workforce and labor shortages

are impacting early learning programs, and many Head Start programs don't have the

classroom space needed to enroll more children.

The Oregon Head Start Association strongly supports HB 3005 and the development of an Early

Childhood Infrastructure Fund and an allocation of \$100 million in funding for grants to eligible

preschool providers and programs. The early childhood infrastructure needs around the state

are significant and this investment would help address this critical need.

Thank you for your time.