



February 7, 2024

House Committee on Early Childhood and Human Services
Chair Lisa Reynolds
Oregon Street Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Chair Reynolds, Co-Chairs Nguyen, Scharf and Committee members,

On behalf of the Bend Chamber's 1,600 members and 8,500 business in Central Oregon, we appreciate the opportunity to provide comments in support of HB 4158 and the -1 amendment. The Bend Chamber has a long history of leading innovative solutions to expand childcare in our region. We were pleased to support HB 3005 in the 2023 legislative session, and the associated \$50 million in lottery bonding authority to address childcare infrastructure needs.

Despite these recent investments, Central Oregon remains in a childcare desert with access to quality, affordable childcare available for only one in three preschool age children. Access to infant and toddler care is even more dire. The costs associated with opening and operating a childcare facility are among the top barriers for new center owners and those interested in the industry. Childcare centers have stringent requirements for health, safety and facility design in order to ensure a safe environment to support the growth and development of our littlest residents.

Locally, we have partnered with the City of Bend and our local Small Business Development Center (SBDC) to support small center providers offset permitting costs, site infrastructure and design or other unique costs associated with this industry. HB 4158 and the -1 amendment would further this work particularly for small childcare providers looking to grow and expand their businesses. The proposed \$500,000 allocation for technical assistance is particularly important as providers navigate the heavily regulated industry.

We wholeheartedly support the bill and look forward to working with our community to promote this opportunity to grow a much-needed industry. Thank you for the opportunity to share our support for this important legislation, and we urge a yes vote.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Katy Brooks", written over a thin horizontal line.

Katy Brooks
President & CEO
Bend Chamber of Commerce