



February 7th, 2024

TO: House Committee on Early Childhood & Human Services
FROM: Our Children Oregon, The Children's Agenda
RE: Support of HB 4158, Equitable Access to the Childcare Infrastructure Fund for Small & Rural Providers

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

The Children's Agenda, convened by Our Children Oregon, brings together ~135 organizations statewide to create a holistic legislative agenda dedicated to advancing whole-child advocacy and improving the well-being of Oregon's children, youth, and families. Our collective created a 2024 legislative agenda that focuses on community-driven solutions to provide access and opportunities for all children and families. **This year, Equitable Access to the Child Care Infrastructure Fund for Small and Rural Providers (HB 4158) is a top priority of the 2024 Children's Agenda.**

The child care industry in Oregon 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. In response to these challenges, the Legislature successfully passed HB 3005 last year, crucial investment in early childhood infrastructure. We recognize that child care and preschool facilities form the bedrock of our communities, and when their numbers fall short of the demand, it places an undue burden on providers – women and people of color who make up the majority of the child care workforce.

However, while the Legislature's intent with HB 3005 was to make these infrastructure investments accessible to all licensed child care provider categories, various legal and logistical impediments linked to lottery bonds have the potential to restrict access, particularly for small child care centers and in-home child care providers (both registered and certified). It is vital to acknowledge that Oregon's small centers and in-home providers are often the lifeline for rural communities, offering culturally and linguistically appropriate care, specialized services for children with disabilities, and non-traditional hours of care, including nights and weekends.

The Children's Agenda strongly supports HB 4158:

- **Equitable Access to the Early Childhood Infrastructure Fund (HB 4158):** Using the Child Care Infrastructure Fund created by HB 3005, the legislature should allocate an

initial \$5 million General Fund to ensure that registered, certified, and small centers (defined as serving 75 or fewer children) have access to these critical child care infrastructure funds.

Without targeted investment in child care infrastructure, especially for our small and rural providers, a lack of facilities will have a profound impact on children, families, and all our care providers. By further investing in early childhood facilities infrastructure, we will increase access to quality early learning and care, ensuring the healthy development and prosperity of all of our children. We thank you for your time and efforts to improve child well-being across the state. We urge your support of HB 4158.

Sincerely,

Our Children Oregon
 Family Forward Oregon
 Children's Institute
 Clackamas Women's Services
 Farmworker Housing Development Corp.
 IRCO
 Latino Network
 Metropolitan Family Service
 Nurse-Family Partnership
 Oregon Alliance of YMCAs
 Oregon Association of Relief Nurseries

Oregon Association of Student Councils
 Oregon AG's Sexual Assault Task Force
 Oregon CASA Network
 Oregon Center for Public Policy
 Oregon Coalition of Local Health Officials
 Oregon Food Bank
 Oregon Primary Care Association
 Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon
 Southern Oregon Success
 Trillium Family Services
 Washington County Kids

