

February 18, 2024

Good afternoon members of the committee. I am providing written testimony for bill 5201. I am Dr. Dawn Hendricks from Clackamas Community College and a board member for Clackamas County Children's Commission. The Commission currently serves about 750 children and families through the programs of Head Start, Early Head Start and Healthy Families in 12 locations throughout the county.

They have been able to meet full enrollment and full staffing, which is a testament to their incredible administrative team, and now have the capacity to expand services to help minimize the childcare crisis. However, facilities are the biggest barrier to increasing capacity. ClackCoKids has sought other funding opportunities, including a request to the Office of Head Start; however, none have come to fruition. Two of the projects have current agreements to purchase at an agreed upon price, however the agreement ends in March so immediate funding is necessary

ClackCoKids has 3 capital construction project requests before the committee. Funding all three is imperative to not only sustain services but also to increase services with more infant and toddler care, the ability to accept subsidies like Employment Related Day Care and fee-for-service opportunities for families who don't qualify for publicly funded or subsidized opportunities. By funding all 3 projects, ClackCoKids could increase its capacity to educate another 150-200 children; as well as to impact the public crisis of children awaiting foster care and spending their first nights away from their home in hotels.

Early Childhood Education is a critical field that shapes the foundation of a child's learning and future success in school and life. Numerous studies have documented improved outcomes for young children when they have the opportunity to attend quality preschool programs, including long term benefits such as increased graduation rates and more likely to attend college. Expanding access to quality, affordable early learning is crucial for all families and especially for those who have limited resources. Funding these construction projects will also benefit our local workforce, as parents who have child care are more likely to enter into and stay in the workforce.

Thank you!

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