

2024 Children's Agenda Budget

Join the powerful coalition of 135 organizations statewide, led by **Our Children Oregon**, in advocating for the well-being of Oregon's children, youth, and families through The Children's Agenda.



A Better Future for Oregon's Children and Families

Dear Co-Chair Girod, Co-Chair Holvey, and Members of the Committee,

The 2024 Children's Agenda Budget is a roadmap of the multiple children's issues that we must prioritize this year. **We collectively call on the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Capital Construction to fully fund our budget asks in SB 5701 to prioritize the needs of Oregon's children and families.**

Oregon's 861,000 children represent one-fifth of the state's population, and the entirety of its future. This session, the Oregon Legislature is addressing pressing issues, including homelessness and addiction, that particularly impact youth and families. Very often, these challenges are rooted in the experiences people have as children. Additionally, Oregon continues to rank in the bottom half of the nation for economic well-being (30th) and education (44th), highlighting the need for immediate and substantial improvement.

Investing in the 2024 Children's Agenda is not just an allocation of resources, but a strategic investment in Oregon's future. We have a responsibility to provide upstream solutions for children and families—to promote prevention, safety, and overall well-being now and in the future. Unfortunately, critical matters from the 2023 Legislative Session remain unfinished, requiring urgent attention to 5 priorities across 3 key domains: economic well-being, education, and family and community.

We thank you for your continued efforts to improve child well-being across the state. We urge your support to allocate funding for our 5 priorities, listed below, in SB 5701.

Sincerely,
Children's Agenda Partners



2024 Children’s Agenda Budget

Economic Well-Being: Every child’s basic needs should be met, including access to housing, food, financial stability, and child care.

Funding Ask	Description
<p>Adequately Fund Employment Related Day Care</p> <p>\$99M to DELC</p> <p>\$75M to Special Purpose Account</p> <p><i>Child Care for Oregon Coalition, Early Childhood Coalition</i></p>	<p>Employment Related Day Care (ERDC) is a lifeline for families—it keeps parents working and ensures kids get the early education they deserve. However, due to increased demand and underfunding, the Department of Early Learning and Care enacted a waitlist for the program on November 4th.</p> <p>ERDC now faces a serious budget shortfall and an indefinite waiting list—which has grown to 1,900+ families and counting. Without additional funding for ERDC, parents may be forced to cut their working hours or quit their jobs or school to care for their kids. We request \$99M to the Department of Early Learning and Care (DELC) and \$75M in the Special Purpose Account (SPA) to ensure the stability of the program for the families currently enrolled.</p>
<p>Expanding Child Care Capacity for Home-Based, Small Centers, and Rural Areas</p> <p>\$5M</p> <p><i>Child Care for Oregon Coalition, Early Childhood Coalition</i></p>	<p>Oregon’s small centers and in-home providers are most likely to operate in rural areas, care for children with disabilities, and offer care on nights and weekends—the kinds of care that are in short supply and most in need of additional capacity.</p> <p>Allocating \$5M makes sure more providers can access the Child Care Infrastructure Fund established in 2023. Ensuring dedicated and flexible funds are available to home-based, rural, and small providers to start or expand their businesses is critical to growing the mixed-delivery child care system that parents and employers need.</p>

Education: All children should receive a quality education and the resources they need to successfully learn, beginning at birth and beyond.

Funding Ask	Description
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<p>Restore Funding for Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education</p> <p>\$22M</p> <p><i>Early Childhood Coalition</i></p>	<p>Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education (EI/ECSE) are special education services for children aged 0 to 5 with disabilities and delays. Special Education services increase school readiness, reduce later costs, and support families to foster life-long success. EI/ECSE needs funding of \$22M to continue existing service levels for children in this program.</p>
<p>Fulfill Funding for Early Literacy</p> <p>\$9.43M for Birth Through Five Literacy</p> <p>\$10M for Tribal and Community Grants</p> <p><i>Our Children Oregon</i></p>	<p>Research shows almost any child can learn to read, but only 29% of Oregon 4th graders meet grade-level benchmarks. The Early Literacy Success Initiative (HB 3198), passed last year, was the first step to improve literacy outcomes across the state. However, funds to support literacy development—the Birth Through Five Literacy Plan (\$9.43M) and Tribal and Community Literacy Grants (\$10M)—must be approved by the Legislature. These programs will increase capacity for early childhood programs, provide researched-align training, and expand culturally specific programs.</p>

Family and Community: Children and their families should feel that they belong, and experience safety and stability.

Funding Ask	Description
<p>Increase Funding for Healthy Families Oregon</p> <p>\$2.7M</p> <p><i>Healthy Families Oregon Coalition</i></p>	<p>Home visiting programs like Healthy Families Oregon (HFO) reduce incidences of child abuse and neglect by as much as 50%. However, HFO has long been underfunded as a state-funded program. Pay parity is still needed for staff, as well as four additional staff at the Department of Early Learning and Care. Allocating \$2.7M in HFO is to invest in the development and safety of Oregon’s children.</p>