



To: Housing Committee on Higher Education and Workforce Development
Subject: Investments in training and skill building need to be matched with system improvements

During the 2023 legislative session, the legislature passed House Bill 2991 which initiated a comprehensive review of the needs of the early childhood workforce. The report, [A Path Forward: Examining and Overcoming Barriers for Oregon's Early Childhood Workforce](#). The Early Childhood Equity Collaborative along with professional researchers and consultants worked directly with 150 professionals actively in the field to make recommendations to the Department of Early Learning and Care.

Both the bills being reviewed by the committee HB 3008 and HB 3011 respond to some of the concerns identified through this action research. Professionals voiced a deep need for consistent compensation that provides livable wages, improved access to benefits and more opportunities to enter or re-enter formal education to expand competencies and move into supervisory and management roles.

A key issue that will continue to face the workforce is recognition for the skills and training they have already acquired. The Oregon Registry Online (ORO) that tracks and confirms certifications, ongoing education and training, new skill development and future professional development is not adequately reflecting the gains of individuals in the system. Our workforce investments are losing their impact when staff don't get the necessary recognition to ensure upward mobility and compensation that reflects their skill level.

Currently, organizations who hire and support early learning and care professionals do not have access to ORO. This prevents these organizations who serve as employers and trainers from being able to:

- Review certificates/hours of the early learning professionals they employ/train
- Assess the step early learning and care professionals are on
- View competencies/certificates gained/needed
- Assist early learning and care providers with updating their credentials on ORO
- Provide technical and translation assistance to providers
- Adequately evaluate professional development needs

As you consider new and ongoing investments in training, education and professional development, consider how to imbed these system improvements so that organizations have access to ORO's administrative platform. This will help ensure those investments are getting to the current and future professionals we want to incentivize to join or remain in the workforce.