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Oregon House of Representatives
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Subject: Testimony in Support of House Bill 3011

Dear Chair, Vice-Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Robert Kleng, and I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 3011. As the Director of Eastern Oregon University Head Start, I have witnessed firsthand the severe childcare crisis facing Oregon families and the systemic challenges within the Early Childhood Education (ECE) workforce.

Oregon is experiencing a critical shortage of accessible, affordable, and high-quality childcare and early education options. This shortage is exacerbated by the lack of a qualified ECE workforce, which has been historically undervalued and under-compensated. The underinvestment in ECE degree programs and training opportunities has made it increasingly difficult to recruit and retain skilled professionals in this essential sector.

HB 3011 addresses these urgent challenges by investing in Oregon's public university and community college ECE programs and campus childcare centers. These centers not only provide critical childcare services to families but also serve as hands-on learning labs for students pursuing degrees in ECE, special education, early intervention, psychology, and human development. By bolstering these educational programs and workforce pipelines, we can create a sustainable, high-quality early learning system that benefits Oregon's children, families, and economy.

Investing in ECE workforce development through HB 3011 is not just about education—it is an economic imperative. The lack of childcare capacity is a barrier preventing parents from participating fully in the workforce, ultimately affecting businesses and economic growth in our state. By ensuring a steady pipeline of trained early childhood educators, we can expand childcare availability, improve quality, and support working families.

HB 3011 proposes a \$20 million investment in Oregon's public higher education infrastructure for the 2025-27 biennium. This funding will enhance post-secondary ECE degree programs, sustain campus childcare centers, and support student recruitment, retention, and graduation in ECE-related fields. This investment is vital to strengthening the "workforce behind the workforce" and ensuring a brighter future for Oregon's children.

I urge you to support HB 3011 and make this critical investment in Oregon's early childhood education system. By prioritizing ECE workforce development, we are taking a necessary step toward addressing the childcare crisis, supporting families, and fostering long-term economic prosperity.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Robert Kleng

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