

To: House Early Childhood & Human Services Committee

From: Dana Hepper, Children's Institute

Date: Thursday, February 20, 2025

Re: HB 2452 - Enhanced Child Care Referral

Chair Hartman, Vice Chairs Scharf & Nguyen, and members of the Committee,

My name is Dana Hepper, and I am the Director of Policy & Advocacy at the Children's Institute. Our vision is to make Oregon the best place to be a kid. **Children's Institute urges your support for HB 2452.** This legislation would provide needed support to Oregon's most vulnerable families to find the child care that meets their needs.

A child's earliest experiences set the foundation for a child's life - establishing critical brain infrastructure. Child care plays a critical role in child development. And it plays a critical role in our society and economy, allowing parents to work and go to school. **Oregon kids, families, and businesses need child care.**

While we often lift up the nearly 10,000 families on the waitlist for Oregon's child care subsidy program (ERDC), we talk a little less about the nearly 4,000 families who have already been approved for a child care subsidy, but have not found a child care provider that meets their needs. Families that struggle to find care face a range of barriers - including primarily speaking a language other than English, needing evening, weekend, or overnight care, needing care in a more rural community, etc.

**Families facing barriers to finding child care likely need extra support to get connected to a care provider who can meet their needs.** Oregon's Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) agencies work closely with child care providers,

and can (and used to) provide this additional support. CCR&Rs well understand the child care providers and have relationships with those providers. They can also learn about what families need and identify providers who may be able to adjust their program hours or other elements to meet family needs.

**Returning referral support for families who are struggling to find care to CCR&Rs just makes sense, which is why we support HB 2452.**