

To: Oregon Department of Early Learning and Care (DELIC)
From: APANO Communities United Fund, as part of Child Care for Oregon (CCFO)
Re: Urgent Need for \$500 Million to Eliminate ERDC Waitlist

Dear Members of Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Education,

My name is Kaliko Castille, and I am representing APANO Communities United Fund as a Co-Chair of the Child Care for Oregon (CCFO) coalition. We strongly support a \$500 million investment to eliminate the waitlist for Oregon's Employment Related Day Care (ERDC) program. We urge you to prioritize this critical funding to ensure that **every eligible family has access to affordable child care** without unnecessary delays.

The ERDC program is a **lifeline for working families** across Oregon, helping parents maintain employment, pursue education, and build economic stability. However, with nearly **10,000 families currently on the ERDC waitlist**, far too many parents are forced to make impossible choices—reducing work hours, turning to unreliable care, or leaving the workforce altogether. This not only impacts their financial well-being but also harms Oregon's economy as a whole.

As an organization serving **Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) families** across Oregon, we know firsthand the **unique barriers our communities face in accessing child care**. Language barriers, cultural mismatches in child care offerings, and the scarcity of culturally responsive providers disproportionately impact AANHPI families, many of whom rely on multi-generational care arrangements out of necessity rather than choice. The lack of affordable, accessible child care deepens economic disparities, particularly for low-income immigrant families who are already navigating complex systems with limited support.

The child care crisis in Oregon is severe. Families across the state face **high costs, long waitlists, and a lack of available providers**, particularly in rural areas and communities of color. We must act now to ensure that no child is left without care simply because of a lack of state funding. Eliminating the ERDC waitlist is one of the **most effective, immediate solutions** to support working parents and stabilize our child care sector.

A \$500 million investment in ERDC will:

- **Ensure equitable access** to child care assistance for all eligible families, including those in linguistically diverse and immigrant communities.

- **Prevent job loss** for parents who cannot afford or find care, particularly impacting women of color who bear the brunt of child care shortages.
- **Strengthen Oregon's economy** by enabling more parents to stay in the workforce.
- **Support child care providers**, many of whom rely on ERDC reimbursements to keep their doors open, while encouraging culturally specific providers to expand their services.

For Oregon to thrive, we must recognize that child care is **essential infrastructure**—the workforce behind the workforce. Investing in ERDC is an investment in our state's **families, economy, and future**. We urge you to take bold action to allocate the necessary funding and ensure that no family—especially those in historically marginalized communities—is turned away from the support they desperately need.

Mahalo for your time and commitment to Oregon's children and families.

Sincerely,
APANO Communities United Fund
As part of Child Care for Oregon (CCFO)

Kaliko Castille, PPACE Director - kaliko@apano.org