



**FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

March 6, 2023

**Joint Subcommittee on Education
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE, Room H-178
Salem, Oregon 97301**

To Whom it may Concern,

The Ashland Family YMCA is a recent provider of early childhood education and care. We decided in 2022 to respond to the significant need in childcare in Southern Oregon, as it is aligned with our mission to fulfill the human potential through Youth Development, Healthy Living and Social Responsibility. In two and a half short years, we have stood up three preschool classrooms that are co-located in Southern Oregon schools.

Recognizing that a primary social determinant of health is employment and income, our focus has been to provide high quality childcare for working families. We operate more hours than any other center in our region, including summer programs, and have 57 slots of preschool. All of our sites boast bilingual programming, meals and swim lessons. If one questions the need for DELC programs and childcare, one only has to look to us, who has a new program operating at full capacity.

We would not have been able to stand up these classrooms, nor will we be able to maintain operation of these classrooms without the support of the various programs DELC administers. Of specific importance to us and our families are:

- **ERDC – we advocate for the expansion of funds available to this program to reduce the waitlist.**
- **Preschool Promise – this program fully supports children in a classroom experience and families who need the care.**
- **Early Learning Hubs – enabling coordination and collaboration for our instructors and families.**
- **Suspension/Expulsion Prevention – the expertise and supports to our team enable us to continue to care for our most challenging kiddos and families.**

The cost of providing care is steep. Our YMCA pays at approximately the 80% for wages associated with Early Childhood Education. Our fee of \$1,500 a month does not cover the cost of this highly skilled workforce. It is only through a combination of Preschool Promise, Capacity Building Dollars, ERDC, and private donations and member subsidies that we are able to continue operation. In fact, we currently have a classroom that we are supporting at a significant loss to our organization as we wait for families to move off the ERDC waitlist, or for new Preschool Promise slots to come back. This is not sustainable.

The cost of not providing care is steeper. Families who are unable to work are unable to access housing, food, healthcare, and more. These families, rather than contributing to the economy and tax base, can sometimes become dependent upon state services. Unfortunately, this can become a cycle if the children of these families are not able to have a stable experience through an Early Childhood Education experience. To cut funding in DELC is shortsighted at best and devastating long term to both the economy and lives.

As a one-time single mother, I urge you to consider the needs of working poor and working class families. As CEO for the Ashland Family YMCA, I urge you to support, through funding and reasonable regulation, the ability for organizations to provide these services.

Sincerely,



Heidi Hill

CEO, Ashland Family YMCA