

March 6, 2023

To Co-Chairs Sollman and Ruiz, and members of the Committee:

My name is Julie Young. I am a resident of Portland, and a retired clinical social worker in Multnomah County. I speak today in support of the Governor's budget request of an increase of \$4 million for Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation to prevent suspension and expulsion of young children.

Did you know that the expulsion/ suspension rate of toddlers from preschool and daycare is three times that of children in K-12? You have heard from others today that even infants are not immune from suspension.

The legislature previously passed bills to reduce or eliminate expulsion of young children but there remains a significant need, especially for children in rural areas and especially for children who don't qualify for special ed services. Children may be on track in cognitive development but struggle with social development or emotional regulation, often related to trauma in their home or trauma in the community. Unable to have words for their feelings, they can be disruptive or uncooperative in childcare or school to the point that the provider says enough, you can't be here. The child experiences shame, shame that might last a lifetime, and the teacher, who probably otherwise loves working with little kids, feels helpless to make a positive difference.

This is where mental health consultation must be available. It's a proven, prevention-based approach that pairs a specially trained consultant with the teacher or parent to coach and guide them toward understanding the child's developmental needs, and to help build a healthy relationship.

Let's not blame the children. Let's give providers the skills to support them. Please increase this budget item by \$4 million over the existing allocation.

Thank you for your service and for this opportunity for me and others to provide testimony.

Best regards,  
Julie Young  
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