

April 10, 2025

TO: Joint Ways and Means Committee  
FROM: Michelle Fuentes, Our Children Oregon  
Subject: Support for the Children's Agenda

Co-Chairs Lieber and Sanchez, Co-Vice Chairs Girod, Gomberg, and Smith,  
and Members of the Committee,

My name is Michelle Fuentes. I am a Policy and Advocacy Intern with Our Children Oregon (OCO). OCO is a statewide nonprofit committed to whole child wellbeing through the Children's Agenda- a comprehensive legislative agenda created and supported by our over 135 member organizations across the state.

I am here to advocate for childcare expansion (SB 2013, HB 2682, SB 5515). As we face uncertain times, it is important for children and families to have safe and accessible childcare. Oregon is a great state that protects it's Oregonians. These bills would allow for families to thrive and achieve their goals. Child care accessibility in Southern Oregon is currently a difficult luxury for families to access that prevents rural areas from thriving. As HeartStart is in a limbo, it has affected my family because I rely on these resources to provide safe childcare for my children as I attend my college classes. This childcare is the reason I am able to be part of organizations such as OCO and Board of Trustees for Southern Oregon University.

Approximately 900 families could have been left without childcare and thousands of employees laid off due to federal funding chaos. Not only does child care provide a safe space for children but allows families to prosper economically. We must do better to support Oregon's children, families, and economy.

Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony,

Michelle Fuentes, Policy and Advocacy Intern, Our Children Oregon

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