



May 2, 2025

To the Capital Construction Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for the funding request to complete the Meadowlark Early Learning Center in Gladstone, Oregon. This vital capital project, led by the Clackamas County Children's Commission, will bring transformative early education services to the Gladstone community and address long-standing gaps in access to child care and school readiness opportunities.

The Meadowlark Early Learning Center will include six classrooms—four for infants and toddlers and two for preschool-aged children—serving approximately 72 children in total. With \$4.16 million in federal funding already secured through the Office of Head Start, the project is well on its way to becoming a cornerstone of early childhood development in our region. However, an additional \$1.5 million is needed to complete renovations and fully realize the promise of this facility.

This project represents far more than bricks and mortar; it is a direct response to urgent, unmet community needs:

- It will provide full-day, year-round early learning through Head Start and Early Head Start programs for 72 children.
- It will bring the **first and only Early Head Start** services to Gladstone, where no infant-toddler care options currently exist.
- It will replace part-day programming at the Gladstone Center for Children and Families (GCCF), expanding access to full-day care for working families across both sites.
- Gladstone is officially designated as a **Child Care Desert**, where the lack of affordable, high-quality early learning options is a barrier to family stability, workforce participation, and long-term economic growth.

The Meadowlark Early Learning Center will not only prepare young children for academic success—it will empower families, support the local workforce, and help close opportunity gaps in an underserved community. The impact of this project will ripple across generations.

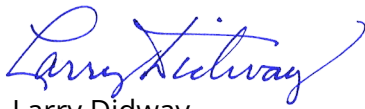
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13455 SE 97th Avenue, Clackamas, OR 97015

On behalf of those who care deeply about the well-being of children and families in Clackamas County, I urge your continued advocacy and leadership in securing the remaining \$1.5 million needed to bring this vision to life.

Thank you for your commitment to early childhood education and for your support of the Meadowlark Early Learning Center.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Larry Didway". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "L" and a stylized "D".

Larry Didway
Superintendent