



Representative Lamar Wise
Oregon House District 48

Child Care Infrastructure Fund

Chair, Vice Chairs, and Members of the Committee, my name is Lamar Wise, and I represent Oregon House District 48, which includes portions of outer Southeast Portland and surrounding communities such as Happy Valley, Damascus, and Boring. I'm here today to speak in strong support of continued funding for the Oregon Child Care Infrastructure Fund.

Right now, many communities in Oregon are classified as child care deserts, where families have few or no licensed care slots available. Reliable child care is no longer a luxury, it's infrastructure. It's the foundation that allows parents to work, businesses to hire, and communities to thrive.

To address this crisis, the Legislature took an important step with House Bill 3005 in 2023, establishing the Child Care Infrastructure Fund and allocating \$50 million in lottery bonds to help providers build, expand, and improve child care facilities. This program enables providers to undertake major renovations, construct new facilities, acquire property, and conduct essential improvements that otherwise would be financially impossible for many small and independent providers.

The results speak for themselves: The first round funded dozens of projects across rural and urban Oregon and demonstrated overwhelming demand, 738 applications requesting nearly \$289 million.

Yet, the Fund's authorized dollars are running out, and without additional appropriation, the next round will be the last. That outcome would leave providers without this essential resource at exactly the moment we need to accelerate, not slow, our progress.

To ensure that Oregon continues to expand safe, high-quality, affordable child care, especially in underserved and high-need communities, I respectfully request this committee's support for an additional \$5 million investment in the Child Care Infrastructure Fund.

This targeted investment will:

- Unlock more child care slots by enabling providers to expand physical capacity,
- Reduce barriers to entry and expansion for small providers, family child care homes, and culturally specific programs,
- Strengthen workforce participation by giving working families the child care options they need to stay employed,
- Leverage local matching funds and planning efforts that are already underway.

Access to reliable care is critical infrastructure, just like roads, bridges, and schools. Investing in child care means investing in Oregon's workforce, our economy, and our children's future. Thank you for your leadership and your consideration.