

To: Senate Education Committee  
From: Dana Hepper, Children's Institute  
Date: Friday, February 20, 2026  
Re: Support for HB 4079 - Safeguarding Students & Families

Chair Frederick and members of the Committee,

Children's Institute is working to make Oregon the best place to be a kid. This includes the ability of children to feel safe and stable in their families and their communities. HB 4079 is an important step to help children feel safe and secure in their public school, and we strongly support this legislation.

For nearly 15 years, the federal government has recognized public schools as "sensitive locations" where immigration enforcement activity was prohibited by federal policy. This sensitive locations policy was an important tool that supported student attendance and learning and family engagement. Last year, this policy was rescinded - creating uncertainty and fear in a place that is supposed to focus on learning.

Young children thrive and develop best when they feel safe. Young children are also particularly sensitive to the uncertainty that has been caused by dramatic changes to immigration enforcement. According to the [Center for the Study of Social Policy](#), early educators report that children are experiencing increased stress and fear at school and in child care. An estimated 171,000 Oregon children have at least 1 parent who has immigrated to the United States ([Vera Institute](#)). Oregon can help children feel safe at school, improve attendance and learn. This also supports educators and school leaders in knowing what to do in uncertain times.

This bill lays out proactive and reactive communication expectations to keep everyone in a school safe. Consistent communication is needed now more than ever.

Children's Institute supports HB 4079 and the entire 2026 Immigrant Justice Package. We urge you to support these community-led policies to protect the freedoms of all Oregonians.