



May 10, 2021

Joint Committee on Ways and Means  
Oregon State Capitol  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301

Senator Johnson, Senator Steiner Hayward, Representative Rayfield and Committee Members,

On behalf of the Bend Chamber of Commerce and our 1,650 members in the Central Oregon region, thank you for allowing us to submit this letter in support of HB 3073, which changes name of Early Learning Division to Department of Early Learning and Care.

Access to quality, affordable child care is one of the strategic goals of the Bend Chamber's advocacy program. Locally, the Chamber has been working on this issue for many years to address the child care desert which exists in Central Oregon. The child care industry has been devastated as a result of COVID. Prior to the pandemic there was only one available opening for every three children in Central Oregon. It is much, much worse today with many child care providers unable to weather the economic turmoil.

HB 3073 is legislation with a long term vision in mind, as it seeks to carve out the Division of Early Learning and create a standalone agency solely focused on Early Childhood Education. Given the complex funding streams with federal, state and local appropriations, as well as a regulatory framework unique to the child care industry, we feel this bill is a much needed step forward for Oregon. We hear time and time again from our business members that access to quality, affordable child care is among the top issues with workforce retention and it has been highlighted during the recent pandemic.

The investment in the bill via general fund dollars and employees is significant. However with the creation of a new Department of Early Learning and Care also comes a reduction of work at the Department of Education and many of the early childhood education staff and budget dollars will be shifted to fund the new Department. We believe it is a wise use for one-time federal dollars to assist with the costs associated with the transfer of duties.

Creating an environment where businesses, their employees and our community excel together through collaboration, advocacy, resources and leadership to meet Bend's business challenges.

As a member of the Early Learning Council, my colleagues and I struggle with how to tackle this issue for our state as it is so complex. HB 3073 is the start to our solution, and I look forward to working with my peer in the public and private sectors to implement the new Department.

We urge a yes vote to fund HB 3073 in its entirety and take this important step forward to address Oregon's child care shortage.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Katy Brooks", is positioned to the left of a vertical line.

Katy Brooks  
President + CEO  
Bend Chamber of Commerce

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