



DATE: October 14, 2021

TO: Deschutes County Commission; Commission Chair Tony DeBone, Commissioner Patti Adair, Commissioner Phil Chang

FROM: Katy Brooks, President & CEO, Bend Chamber of Commerce

RE: Support for multi-organization request for \$7.8 M in ARPA childcare funding

Chair DeBone and Commissioners,

The Bend Chamber represents more than 1,200 businesses and 27,000 employees in Deschutes County/Bend. We support the \$7.8 million request from the county's allocation of the American Rescue & Recovery Act (ARPA) funding for the comprehensive, regional childcare proposal presented to you at the October 13th board of commissioners meeting.

We have known of the impacts of Central Oregon's childcare desert for years, with little recourse to correct it. It is affecting families, employers, and the economy. ARPA is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to help get us on track to allow families to find quality, affordable childcare, and for our employers to fill many of their workforce shortages.

Deschutes County is not alone in experiencing the economic strains of long-term decline of childcare. There are an estimated 14 million parents who are without childcare in the U.S., costing more than \$600 billion in US GDP. In Deschutes County we know that more than 3,300 children are without childcare, which means only 38 percent of children in the county are being served. Now is the time to address this and there simply is no other way to do it without government investment.

I have shared our region's childcare proposal with early learning and childcare experts in the state and across the country. This is a model that is widely viewed as comprehensive and a unique and effective approach to addressing the labor shortage, need for quality care and the challenges of a stable business model for childcare.

I also serve on the Oregon Early Learning Council. While I cannot speak for the council, I do have the opportunity to see how other regions are addressing the childcare shortage and utilizing ARPA funds to do so. The childcare program proposed to you last week is exceptionally well done, with multiple partners sharing the funding load and committing to participate. I believe it will be one of the most successful in our state.

We realize the investment is great, with many competing and important funding requests before you. We believe the return on investment for this comprehensive childcare program will pay dividends to Central Oregon families, the workforce, and our economy for years to come.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Katy Brooks", written in a cursive style.

Katy Brooks
President/CEO