

To: House Early Childhood & Human Services Committee

From: Jennifer Hook, Manager of Child Care Resource and Referral - Umatilla, Morrow & Union Counties

Date: Tuesday, February 19, 2025

Re: HB 3496 - Best Practices Guide for Citing & Incentivizing Child Care

Dear Chair Hartman, Vice Chairs Scharf & Nguyen, and members of the Committee,

My name is Jennifer Hook, and I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 3496. As the Manager for Child Care Resource and Referral in Umatilla, Morrow, and Union Counties and as a former home childcare provider. I have worked in the early childhood field for over 30 years. In my current role, one of the rolls my team and I complete is to assist childcare providers with state licensure. I have seen firsthand the significant challenges they face in establishing and maintaining childcare facilities in our rural region.

Our counties span over 7,319 square miles and are classified as childcare deserts. Providers in these rural communities must navigate inconsistent zoning requirements, varying city and county regulations, and unclear site approval processes. This patchwork of regulations creates confusion, delays, and unnecessary barriers that deter potential providers from opening much-needed childcare facilities. Many families in our region live on acreages, farms, and ranches, making it difficult—if not impossible—to meet current licensing requirements. As a result, some providers abandon the process altogether, while others remain unlicensed or operate illegally in environments that may not meet safety standards.

To address these challenges, House Bill 3496 provides a critical opportunity to expand the number of allowable sites for childcare facilities and establish clear, consistent guidelines for where they can be located. The bill streamlines the permitting process, reduces bureaucratic hurdles, and promotes best practices to encourage childcare development.

A key component of HB 3496 is its effort to prevent local governments from imposing restrictive land use regulations, excessive fees, or unreasonable conditions on childcare providers. By removing these barriers, the bill makes it easier to open and sustain childcare programs, particularly in rural and frontier areas where access is severely limited. Expanding childcare options not only meets the growing demand but

also ensures that working families have the support they need to remain in the workforce.

By creating a more predictable and accessible process for childcare development, HB 3560 will strengthen communities across Oregon. It will allow more providers to open and maintain high-quality programs, increasing the availability of safe, reliable childcare for families. Supporting this bill is an investment in Oregon's children, families, and workforce.

I urge you to support HB 3496 to help make childcare more accessible and sustainable for all families in our state.

Thank you for your time and commitment to Oregon's children and families. I appreciate your consideration and look forward to your support for this critical legislation.

Sincerely,
Jennifer Hook

Sincerely,

Jennifer Hook
Manager, Child Care Resource & Referral
Umatilla, Morrow, and Union Counties
jhook@umchs.org
541-564-6878-Ext220