



## Testimony on HB 3005 from Darcee Kilsdonk, Executive Director

Chairperson Reynolds, Members of the Committee and our Community at Large-

Thank you for allowing me to speak today. I serve as the Executive Director of Clackamas County Children's Commission where we serve about 800 children and families through the programs of Head Start, Early Head Start and Healthy Families.

Over the past decade, early care and education has experienced tremendous growth in both duration and dosage of services by increasing both hours of service and days of service. More recently our program has increased infant-toddler care in response to the great need expressed in our communities. As I'm sure you are aware, most of our state is in a child care desert. And only 2% of infants and toddlers in Oregon have access to any kind of registered care. Because Head Start programs serve the neediest of the needy, in fact the average family of 4 makes less than \$27,000 in order to qualify and/or have needs like experiencing houselessness, children in foster care or families who are on public assistance to survive. These families are least able to afford quality care for their children and we know that their path out of poverty must be through education and employment...both of which require child care in order for them to be successful.

When we increase our services, this creates a need for additional classroom space. For example, when we have a part day classroom we can serve 40 children in that space, each group of 20 receiving 3 ½ hours of care per day. However, when we increase that time to a full day experience in order to maximize a child's potential for school readiness AND to support the families' child care needs; we can only serve 20 children in that space. It becomes even more scarce when we are serving infants and toddlers because those spaces can only house 8 children due to licensing requirements and Head Start Performance Standards.

The situation is exacerbated by the lack of available facilities across the state that meet licensing requirements AND even if you find a space that has the required square footage both indoors and outside, it often needs major renovation in order to make the kitchen pass sanitation, fire safety requirements and space appropriate for children. Head Start programs are stretched right now to create wages that are competitive in order to attract quality staff to care for these very vulnerable populations. Our budgets do not allow for construction improvements that are at an all time high to be afforded within our funding mechanisms. Recently I put out a bid for renovation of a center to improve accessibility and to put new siding, new windows and a roof on a center that houses just one classroom that is aged and in disrepair. We expected the project to be less than \$200K and it came in at over \$400K. This forced us to choose between accessibility and energy efficiency and keeping the center operational. HB 3005 would create funding streams necessary for programs like mine to meet the community needs for child care in order to uplift those populations out of poverty. It is for these reasons that I ask you to support HB 3005.

Thank you for your time.