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February 24, 2021

Senate Committee on Education
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support for SB 236

Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Thomsen, and Members of the Committee,

Our Children Oregon's (OCO) mission is to be a voice and force for the common good for all Oregon children, ensuring all children have the resources and opportunities they need to reach their full potential. OCO is the result of the merger between two historic Oregon non-profits: The Children's Trust Fund of Oregon and Children First for Oregon. We elevate data and lived experience to prioritize children and center communities. We continue to connect a community of 115 advocates, coalitions, and organizations through The Children's Agenda, a legislative agenda championing equitable state legislative policies and shared investments to improve the lives of Oregon's children and their families.

SB 236 to reduce and eventually eliminate suspension and expulsion in early care and education programs is a priority item on the 2021 Children's Agenda.

National data shows that Black children, Native children, and children who experience disabilities are asked to leave early care and education programs at disproportionately higher rates than other children. Black children experience expulsion rates from preschool at a rate 3.6 more than white children. Last year's [statewide household survey](#) completed as part of the Oregon Preschool Development Grant found that children who were American Indian/Alaskan Native/Hawaiian Native and those who were multi-racial/multi-ethnic were about three times more likely than white children to be asked to leave care.

In our decision to prioritize this issue on the 2021 Children's Agenda, we looked to the recommendations from Black Child Development PDX and the lived experiences of BIPOC early learning practitioners who have seen and witnessed the impacts of the current structures on our youngest children of color firsthand.

["Supporting the First 1,000 Days of a Child's Life: An Anti-racist Blueprint for Early Childhood Well-being and Child Welfare Prevention"](#), a recent

The Children's Agenda

is a broad slate of equitable investments and policy solutions to meet the holistic needs of Oregon children, youth, and their families.



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report from the Center for the Study of Social Policy, highlights the importance of promoting well-equipped early learning settings for young children of color and equitable policies that eliminate the disproportionate expulsions of children of color in child care and preschool settings. These negative early experiences impact future educational outcomes, and show that the school to prison pipeline begins in our early care and preschool settings.

We must equip our early childhood providers so they can disrupt the cycle of the current structure where too many providers don't have the support and training they need to support all children to one where they have the tools to be able to keep all children in their programs. SB 236 would provide robust coaching and support for early care educators to have the tools to better support children in their programs. By passing SB 236, Oregon can make progress on this issue by:

- clearly defining suspension and expulsion
- collecting data for accountability and improvement
- supporting early childhood educators to build the skills that allow all children to thrive, such as anti-bias training and infant-toddler-early childhood mental health consultation
- ending suspension and expulsion by July 1, 2026

Thank you for your consideration, **and we strongly urge you to support SB 236 with the proposed amendment.**

From the Our Children Oregon Team,

Chis Coughlin, Policy, Advocacy, and Engagement Director

Jenifer Wagley, Executive Director

View the 2021 Children's Agenda at www.ourchildrenoregon.org/2021-childrens-agenda