

EARLY CHILDHOOD LOBBY DAY 2019

Key Messages and Talking Points

MESSAGE: *Oregon is in an early childhood crisis. It's time to invest big in the connected solutions that work—child care, early learning, and partnerships with families. The Early Childhood Coalition's package of proven approaches grows young minds, keeps children safe, and prepares them for kindergarten during the fastest period of brain development.*

MESSAGE: *Early childhood is the foundation for all future learning and life experiences. While all babies are born with incredible potential, not all of Oregon's young children are getting the experiences they need to thrive. Every experience is a learning experience for babies and toddlers, so when they don't get the supports they need their development can suffer, leading to lifelong consequences.*

MESSAGE: *Investing in early childhood reduces inequality, expands young minds, and sets children on the path to success in school and life.*

MESSAGE: *All children need loving and positive relationships with the adults in their lives. Investing in young children means investing in the workforce of teachers and providers who keep children safe and nurture and shape young minds in the most intensive period of human brain development.*

MESSAGE: *K–12 can't do it alone. When kids who experience barriers to opportunity due to race/ethnicity, poverty, disability, language, or geographic location get the high-quality care and early education all children need and deserve, they are **four times** more likely to graduate from high school, more likely to experience lifelong health, and have fewer interactions with the criminal justice system.*

TALKING POINTS:

- **90 percent of brain development** takes place in the first five years of life and not enough young children in Oregon are getting the early care and education they need during this time.
- This is what Oregon's early childhood crisis looks like:
 - **47 percent of children 0-5** live in low-income households, the state is a child care desert, and we rank **49th** in high school graduation.
 - **30,000 young children living at or below the federal poverty** level don't have access to high-quality preschool.
 - **98 percent of young children with high needs** enrolled in Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) don't get the level of service they need to support their development and prepare them for success in school.
- It's critical that every baby have equitable opportunities to thrive. There are no achievement gaps at birth, but the effects of poverty and racial discrimination create disparities in early life that lead to opportunity and achievement gaps by the time a child enters kindergarten.
- Though **90 percent of brain development** occurs in the first five years of life, public spending on early childhood programs lags far behind what's needed to ensure young children have what they need to thrive in school and life.

- One year of infant and toddler child care in Oregon is more expensive than public college tuition.
- **58 percent of children** under age three are in some form of non-parent child care. We don't have the luxury to not train, educate, and compensate the adults who spend a significant amount of time with children and have tremendous influence on the well-being and development. These providers are enriching and growing young minds, nurturing their development, and keeping them safe and protected when their developing brains need to be nurtured and stimulated most.
- Early care and education providers are often the first adults to recognize emerging developmental disabilities and delays in young children. When disabilities are detected early and young children receive the right level of early intervention, the impact of delays and disabilities are reduced, and children need fewer special education services in preschool and K–12.
- We entrust early childhood educators with the monumental task of teaching and caring for young children during the most intensive period of brain development—when they learn language, how to reason, problem solving, foundational reading, writing, and math skills—but their pay doesn't reflect the world changing effect early childhood educators have on the lives of young children.
- In 2017, wages for child care workers in Oregon averaged **\$11.47 per hour**—on par with the earning of office receptionists, janitors, and general laborers. Not surprisingly, the early childhood profession suffers from high turnover.
- Head Start teachers and staff do not earn a livable wage. In some settings, they are paid drastically lower than their peers teaching children of the same age group in the same building.
- There is no time to waste. High-quality birth to five programming shows a **13 percent return on investment**. More importantly, kids get the social-emotional and early reading, writing, and math skills that have long-term academic, health, and life benefits. Investing in early childhood is good for kids, their families, our communities, and our state.