

Chairs Gilliam and Tomei and members of the Human Services Committee, I am Mike McCabe, Crook County Judge. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today as you consider HB 4165 regarding further development of Early Learning Council goals on behalf of children and families.

The Commission in Crook County provides joint citizen and agency input in working together to improve conditions for Children and Families. The Commission brings forward target issues for children and families and with partners, identifies and implements solutions that are proven to work. This process has also resulted in leveraging additional resources to effect positive change in a County that continues to have high rates of unemployment and youth and family poverty.

Crook County Commissioners support those efforts and believe that County Government has a clear role in assuring success for children and families in our county and region.

We support the outcome of having children enter school ready to learn and have been working regionally with Deschutes and Jefferson Counties to develop a service delivery system for children prenatal through 6 years that will integrate with Health reform efforts and assure increased access to services for the most vulnerable youth.

In the spirit of support for these efforts, we would offer the following suggestions to HB 4165 to make it more effective locally:

- 1) Current language in the bill proposes to discontinue local Commissions on Children and Families, effective June 30, 2012. Because there is additional work to do to define the statewide Early Learning system, we believe that this timeline should be extended to June 30, 2013 to allow for continuation of crucial programs and supports for children and families at the local level. If supported, repealing local commission statutes could be handled in the 2013 legislative session.
- 2) We support bill language that would delay an RFP process for accountability hubs (referred to in this bill as community-based coordinators of early learning services) to 2013. Delaying the RFP process will allow for HUBS to formulate in a way that will ensure success and smooth transition for children and families locally.
- 3) The early learning target audience has been referred to as children 0-5 years old. To support integration with our health reform efforts and what will become the Youth Development Council, we would suggest a slight revision to the age range pre-natal through 6 years old.
- 4) We support a plan to provide for services for youth beyond the early learning age range as is suggested in this legislation through establishment of a Youth Development Council.

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5) With the development of the Youth Council, it is suggested that federal Youth Investment funds and Juvenile Crime Prevention funds be provided to address risk factors that negatively impact educational success, school retention and law abiding behaviors. While Gang Prevention might be one strategy toward those outcomes, it is not the only strategy that will increase educational success across the state.

Thank you for the opportunity to share suggestions on how this legislation might be more effective for us locally.