

MEASURE: HB 4165  
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House Committee on Human Services, Hearing on HB 4165, February 8, 2012

To the Co-Chairs and Members of the Committee:

I am Mary Louise McClintock, Early Childhood Program Director at The Oregon Community Foundation, Oregon's largest foundation.

The foundation's board of directors voted just today to endorse HB 4165 and urge its passage. OCF doesn't take positions on public policy positions very often - only when the stakes are highest and when our voice can make the most difference.

Early childhood development has been one of OCF's highest priorities for two decades, and we invest between \$1 million and \$2 million per year in community-based early care and learning organizations throughout the state. We believe there is no more cost-effective investment for us as a philanthropic organization. Through our partnerships with public and nonprofit organizations, we know first-hand that there are excellent programs all over Oregon. Some of them, such as relief nurseries and Oregon Head Start/Pre-K, are national models.

But we're extremely concerned that we are not seeing the results we should be from those efforts. Too many children are arriving in kindergarten and first grade unprepared to succeed. We see the consequences in our persistent and troubling achievement gap and in the abysmal high school graduation rate.

We can do better than this. We know so much about what works in reaching and supporting young children at risk and their families. But from our vantage point, we see publicly funded early childhood programs in the same communities that aren't coordinating with each other because of barriers between agencies and funding streams, because we aren't tracking the same outcomes from program to program, and because we lack not only a common data system but a unified vision for our work in the earliest years.

OCF believes HB 4165 is a critical first step in moving Oregon toward a stronger, more cohesive and more integrated system for investing in young children. We support the bill's call for more emphasis on outcomes and accountability in the delivery of state early care and learning programs. Other needed and long-overdue improvements the bill would authorize are a kindergarten readiness assessment, a quality rating system for child care providers, and a unified data system.

As private funders, we urge you to support this bill - not only because we share your goals for helping our most vulnerable children and families succeed, but because the publicly funded early childhood system is in many cases the framework for our investments, too. These changes will help ensure that the dollars we and our foundation colleagues invest go further and that they are used more effectively.