

February 8, 2012

Human Services Committee in HR D @ 3 PM

Chairs Tomei & Gilliam and honorable colleagues,

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you about HB 4165, the Early Learning Council bill.

**I oppose House Bill 4165 and the elimination of the Commission on Children & Families system.**

In the past twelve years, I have probably spent more time working on Commission on Children & Families issues at the county and state levels than any member of the legislature. Thus, I am testifying with experience and knowledge of the current system.

I am concerned we are eliminating a system which has succeeded and has a national reputation for dealing with children and families issues. Our Commission system is a simple system with a minimum budget. It has led the state in using evidence based programs with outcomes. In fact, we passed SB 267 which requires 75 % of the State Commission programs be evidenced based.

I oppose the Early Learning Council bill:

1. The proposed system adds management levels which make it much more difficult to get critical issues to the Governor's. Under the Commission system, counties can quickly identify local issues; like increased teenage pregnancies; under-aged smoking, homeless teenagers, and day care quality. Counties then work with the State Commission who reports directly to the Governor. I am not sure how many layers exist in the new proposal between the children & families issues and the Governor.
2. I believe the proposed system will be more costly than the current budget due to the additional bureaucrats and layers of management. Thus, there will be more state employees, secretaries, vehicles, and fewer funds actually addressing the children & families issues. The current system uses many citizen volunteers.
3. I am concerned about the constitutional issue of the legislature delegating responsibilities stated in Article III, Section 2 related to legislative budgetary control.

**If this bill goes forward; I support the AOC, Deschutes County Commission, and Head Start recommendations concerning HB 4165.**

Finally, I submitted amendments, which I provided Mr. Shepard, to address the implementation of HB 3684, the "Keep Kids Safe" license plate bill from the 2011 session.

In closing, I am concerned the good intentions of the supporters of this bill may result in less timely and less cost effective attention to critical children and families issues.

Respectfully submitted,

Gene Whisnant  
State Representatives