



WASHINGTON COUNTY
COMMISSION ON
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Together for Children

**Washington County
Commission on Children and Families**

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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES AND HOUSING

Testimony on HB 2013 – April 17, 2013

William Thomas, Washington County Department of Health and Human Services

Chair Tomei and Members of the Committee:

For the record, my name is William Thomas. I am testifying on behalf of the Washington County Department of Health and Human Services and our Commission on Children and Families.

Our request to the Human Services and Housing Committee is very straightforward: whether you decide to implement early learning demonstration projects or to phase in implementation of early learning hubs statewide, we urge that this committee provide legislative direction needed by the Early Learning Council (ELC), or request that the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Services provide such direction, so the ELC can implement a transition plan to ensure there is not an interruption in local services to children ages 0-6 and their families between July 1, 2013 and implementation of the early learning system in communities throughout Oregon.

We are particularly concerned about implementing a transition plan for services meeting ELC goals for supporting families in getting children ready for kindergarten, including effective, low-cost high-impact services, that are currently funded with local flexible funds directed to counties through Children, Youth and Families, Family Support and Great Start funding streams.

In 2011-12, with funds provided through the State Commission on Children and Families, Washington County funded services for 8,897 children ages 0-6 and their families. We served 397 children, or 4.5% of the total, with Healthy Start funds, while we served 8,500 children, or 95.5% of the total, with the three local flexible funding streams identified above. We anticipate that a similar number of children and families will be served in 2012-13.

Last Thursday the ELC Director indicated that in the next 10 days or so a transition plan would be communicated to counties that have Healthy Start and Relief Nursery programs. While this is welcome news, as indicated a transition plan for these funding streams alone will only represent a small fraction of young children receiving Commission-funded services in Washington County.

At the same time, the ELC Director indicated that a transition plan for services funded with the three local flexible funding streams would have to wait until there is legislative direction through HB 2013 about how the early learning system is to be implemented during the next biennium. This is a very reasonable position. So, to that end, we hope that your decisions today will provide necessary direction so the ELC can develop and communicate a transition plan for other funding streams as quickly as possible, in order to reduce the uncertainty of providers, staff and families.