

April 29, 2013

To the Members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means:

On behalf of The Oregon Community Foundation (OCF), we urge your support for **HB 3232-1, HB 3233, and HB 3234.**

Early childhood development has been one of OCF's highest priorities for more than two decades, and we invest nearly \$2 million per year in early care and learning programs. We strongly believe that programs reaching children 0-6 and their families are among the best investments we can make in the future of our state. Oregon's appalling 67 percent high school graduation rate, persistent achievement gap for children of color, and lackluster college-going rate indicate we are falling alarmingly short when it comes to ensuring that all children get off to a good start. Our strong partnerships throughout the private, public, and non-profit sectors, including the Oregon Parenting Education Collaborative and the Early Childhood Funders Learning Circle, demonstrate our long-term approach to seeking the best solutions for our children.

In addition, OCF has long supported programs and strategies within the K-12 arena and invests approximately \$6 million annually to: strengthen quality teaching and learning that are based on evidence-based practices known to improve student outcomes; provide educators with the best professional development and advancement opportunities available; explore new ways to recruit, prepare, hire, and retain new teachers; and provide experiential learning opportunities for students. Our strong partnership with The Chalkboard Project and its signature program, CLASS, demonstrates our commitment to supporting one of the biggest influencers in children's lives—the classroom teacher.

We applaud efforts to increase state resources in the earliest years and to highlight existing evidence-based practices that improve student achievement. The aforementioned House bills set in motion the following actions to ensure progress toward the 40-40-20 goal and improve the employability of Oregonians:

- Increased investments in early learning, consolidation of key early childhood programs in a new Division of Early Learning within the Department of Education, and a proposed redesign of early learning programs at the local level through the creation of regional community-based coordinators;
- Increased funding to expand ASPIRE to additional schools and community-based sites across Oregon;
- Enhanced opportunities to increase students' proficiency in science and math, increase their engagement and essential college and career skills, and connect them to the world of work; and
- Development of a network of leadership and collective responsibility for advancing the teaching profession among providers of early learning services, K-12 educators, education service districts, and teacher education programs.

There is much work to be done and many implementation details still to be addressed throughout the education continuum. These efforts represent bold action to help our state be more strategic and accountable in using education resources—leading us toward significant improvements in education outcomes. The Oregon Community Foundation looks forward to working in partnership with the State of Oregon to ensure that all Oregon children and students succeed.

Sincerely,



Max Williams
President and CEO



Eric Parsons
Chair, Board of Directors

cc: Gov. John Kitzhaber, M.D.
Dr. Rudy Crew, Chief Education Officer