



# Marion County

## OREGON

### Board of Commissioners

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May 15, 2013

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Senator Rod Monroe & Rep. Betty Komp, Co-Chairs  
Ways & Means Subcommittee on Education  
Oregon State Capitol  
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Co-Chairs Monroe and Komp:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 2013A. Let me clarify that I am testifying as an individual elected official, and not representing a position taken by the Marion County Board of Commissioners.

Since the passage of SB 909 (2011) and HB 4165 (2012), early learning partners in Marion County have been working intentionally to create a seamless transition from the current county-based system of services 0-18 to the proposed regional system of early learning hubs. Here is a synopsis of our efforts.

- In December 2011, the Marion County Board of Commissioners convened a work session and invited interested parties, including commissioners from Polk and Yamhill counties, to discuss the early learning legislation. Duke Shepard from the Governor's Office participated in our work session.
- Beginning January 2012, the county convened all interested early learning stakeholders to work together to redesign the early learning system. Representatives of each stakeholder signed a memorandum of collaboration and developed a joint work plan.
- The stakeholder group, along with Great Beginnings—representing program managers from regional and local early learning programs—met monthly for 14 months, approving recommendations that lay the foundation for system redesign. A new nonprofit organization has now been formed.
- Marion County created a Community Services Department in July 2012 that encompasses Children & Families, Dog Control, the Marion County Fair, and (liaison to) OSU Extension Services. We have consistently augmented state funds for children and families services with county general fund and intend to continue our local commission, although with more focused local initiatives. Sheriff Jason Myers and the Honorable Tracy Prall, Marion County Circuit Court, serve as commission co-chairs.

- Marion County recently entered into a contractual relationship with Willamette University's Atkinson Graduate School of Management to assess the capacity of organizations interested in providing hub services. The county released a Request for Qualifications, based on authority from House Bill 4165, Section 77a.

The bottom line is that our regional and local early learning partners are prepared, willing, and excited to be selected as "early implementers" of coordinated early learning services in our state.

I applaud the provisions in HB 2013A that require standardized screening and appropriate referral services within the voluntary early learning system; that expand Healthy Start services from first-birth families to all eligible families with young children; that require collaborative work with coordinated care organizations to address prenatal care; and that engage preschool children with disabilities with interventions that promote expressive and receptive communication.

House Bill 2013A also addresses concerns I raised in the House Committee on Human Services and Housing with regard to rolling out early learning hubs statewide within the 2013-15 biennium, expanding the number of hubs from five demonstration projects to a maximum of 16 hubs across Oregon. Two remaining issues are:

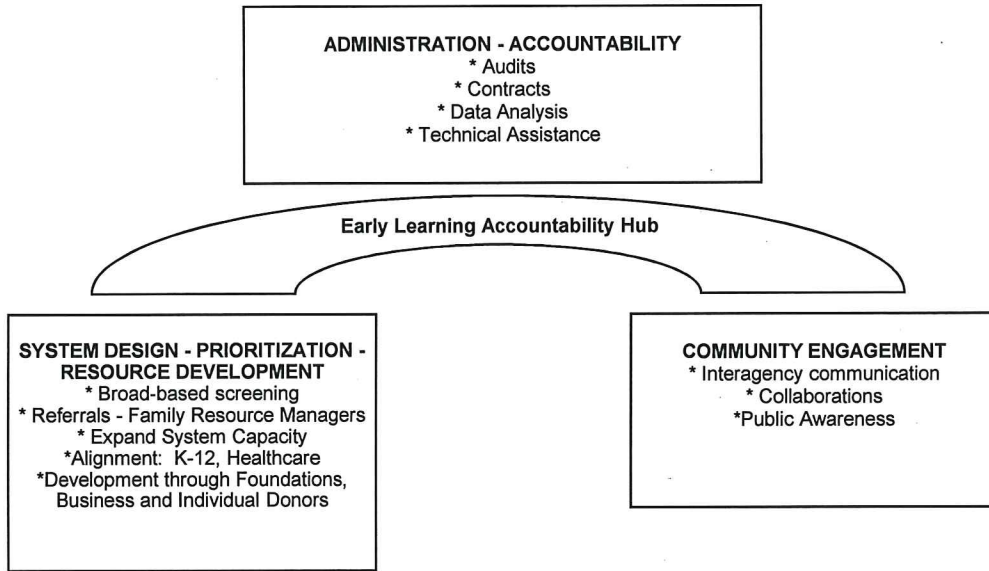
- (1) assuring hubs have funds for start up and implementation;
- (2) addressing the transition of programs currently overseen by counties that are likely to continue under early learning hubs, specifically transition funds for programs supported with flexible dollars that have historically been allocated to counties. To be considered, programs would need to demonstrate outcomes and serve young children and/or their families.

While I support the concept of "lean" governance in early learning, it must also be recognized that a solid legal entity needs to be in place to manage state funds and effectively coordinate regional and local services. And while it is certainly undesirable to solicit organizations that are simply interested in "the money," it is likewise probable that organizations with strong qualifications will not be willing to take on an additional workload without some compensation.

At a minimum, a hub organization will need staff to execute program coordination, resource development (grant writing, community engagement), and accountability functions (finance, procurement, data analysis). These functions generally require more than one skill set and will likely require multiple positions that support each hub.

The following diagram illustrates the core functions of early learning hubs described in current law.

**EARLY LEARNING "HUB" COMPONENTS**  
**Per House Bill 4165 (2012)**



Other issues that have not yet been addressed in HB 2013A include:

- Conflicts of interest within the early learning governance structure;
- Whether the early learning governance structure should operate as a public body, given that the entity will be making decisions about public funds; and
- An amendment to correct a technical error in House Bill 4165, Section 77b, which reads as follows:

**SECTION 77a. (1) In order to ensure an orderly transition from the local system of commissions on children and families, an entity submitting an application under section 77 of this 2012 Act must show inclusion of, and coordination with, county governments.**

**(2) On and after January 1, 2014, an entity submitting an application under section 77 of this 2012 Act is required to show that county governments participated in the development of the application as provided by section 77 (4) of this 2012 Act.**

**SECTION 77b. Section 77a of this 2012 Act is repealed on January 1, 2014.**

Section 77b should be amended to read: Section 77a (1) of this 2012 Act is repealed on (the agreed-upon date in Section 77a(2)).

I appreciate your consideration of these ideas and will be happy to provide additional information to support the legislature's work in creating a framework that will produce the greatest opportunity to improve early learning outcomes for Oregon's youngest children and their families.

Sincerely,

Janet Carlson  
Commissioner