

TO: Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education
FROM: Stacy Michaelson, SEIU Local 503
RE: HB 2013-A
DATE: May 15, 2013

Co-Chairs Komp and Monroe, Members of the Committee:

For the record, my name is Stacy Michaelson. I am a political organizer for SEIU Local 503. I am here today to speak to the promise we see in HB 2013, as well as some concerns. We believe that the State's recent focus on early learning and connecting families in need with services is an important step forward for Oregon. However, we also have some suggestions for improving the current language.

Our members who work at the Department of Human Services understand well the need to ensure that families are connected with the services they need as soon as possible. Early identification and support provision can help families get on the right track. Many of our members are already responsible for helping families determine which services exist that may be right for them, and we believe that their expertise needs to be leveraged. As HUBs begin to take shape, we want to ensure we are not duplicating efforts in regard to determinations of eligibility for state services and also that we are utilizing the expertise that exists among current state workers.

We also want to protect the integrity of programs for children and guarantee that families have access to the assistance they need. We appreciate the work that was done in the policy committee to guarantee that quality improvements for "Family, Friend and Neighbor" child care providers will be given as much consideration as the quality improvement system for licensed child care providers. This has been a very component of this legislation for us, as our providers serve over half of the families utilizing the Employment Related Day Care program, and our providers are committed to providing the best care possible and to helping the kids in their care prepare for school.

As much as our members look forward to new, meaningful training opportunities, serving families is their first priority. As the ELC conversation was first beginning, there was concern among advocates that funding for programs like ERDC could be jeopardized. Unfortunately, this is a concern that continues to come up. With the approved ERDC caseload the lowest it's ever been, we believe that investments in quality should not come at the expense of families getting access to child care assistance, and I ask the committee to keep that in mind as this bill and others are considered.

I thank you for your time today, and I look forward to working with members of the committee to make the necessary adjustments to the current language.