

March 11, 2013

Representative Carolyn Tomei, Chair
House Committee on Human Services and Housing

Madam Chair and Committee Members:

Thank you for listening to my testimony this afternoon regarding HB 2013. It is a positive step to move HB 4165 forward.

Douglas County is ready now to be one of the “first wave” of early learning hubs.

Leaders from health care, business, education, and social services were brought together by Douglas County Commissioner Joe Laurance to identify organizations that could fill the hub role. The Douglas Education Service District stepped forward to serve as the early learning hub. The ESD’s proposal was endorsed by community leadership. At a subsequent meeting, representatives from Coos, Curry, Jackson, Josephine, Klamath, and Lake Counties were invited to discuss regional interests.

Early learning partners in Douglas County have a track record for working together to achieve outcomes for young children and their families.

Douglas County was chosen as one of four Child Care Resource and Referral sites in Oregon to participate in the QRIS pilot.

Yoncalla Elementary School in Douglas County recently entered into a partnership with the Children’s Institute on the early learning initiative called Early Works. Yoncalla joins Earl Boyles Elementary of Southeast Portland.

In July 2011, the Early Learning System Design workgroup was formed from members of the Douglas County Early Childhood Planning Coalition—created in 1997. Local representatives from Head Start, Public Health, Early Intervention, Relief Nursery, Healthy Start, our CCO-Umpqua Health Alliance, Department of Human Services, and Umpqua Community College participate in the workgroup.

Over the past 20 months, workgroup members have reviewed state reports, mapped early learning services, analyzed data, and identified opportunities to improve upon Douglas County's service delivery system. The workgroup invited representatives from CaCoon, DHS, Oregon Parent Education Consortium, Oregon Child Care Resource, and Referral Network, and the Oregon Health Authority, among others, to discuss system elements. With the help of these content specialists, the workgroup created an early learning system design with enhanced coordination and capacity that aligns with the state's vision and goal that "children arrive at kindergarten prepared to succeed".

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