



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF OREGON**

March 18, 2013

To: House Human Services and Housing Committee
Representative Carolyn Tomei, Chair
Representative David Gomberg, Vice Chair
Representative Andy Olson, Vice Chair
Members of the Committee

Re: HB 2013 - The Early Learning Council - Comments

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan, grassroots political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. The League has a national position on Early Intervention for Children at Risk, which states that the League supports policies and programs at all levels of the community and government that promote the well-being, encourage the full development of and ensure the safety of all children. Thus, the League supports the concept of the Early Learning Council.

As in the 2011 Session, the League has some concerns about the transition of the existing early childhood services to the new system. Since the hubs will not come on board until January 2014, the counties will need to have bridge funding for staff to perform the data entry and oversight function for the local services as they wind down. Some counties are in financial hardship and will not have an available staff person for this function.

The League supports the funding priority for current local services rather than staff and administration for a local agency. However, the 15% administrative share at the regional or local level may not be sufficient to attract an existing regional agency to take on the administrative task for the region. A governmental or non-profit agency is most likely.

The Early Learning Council is proposing to cover five demonstration projects, which will cover limited areas of the state and leave most of the state without prevention programs. When the Commission on Children and Families was phased out, the plan was to continue to fund local services. Now the plan is to fund only Healthy Start and Relief Nurseries and the demonstration projects starting on January 1, 2014. This plan will discontinue local services such as programs for teen parents, child care training, parenting education, and mental health counseling for families.

The League supports early childhood services for children and families, but the current proposal cuts the availability of prevention programs throughout many regions of the state. This outcome of the plan will result in a considerable loss of prevention funds in most areas of the state. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this legislation.

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Robin Wisdom
LWVOR President

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Karen Nibler
Social Policy Coordinator