

Date: March 10, 2015

To: Co chairs Representative Komp and Senator Monroe and members of the Joint Ways and Means Education Committee

From: Judy Newman Co-director of Early Childhood CARES, the early intervention and early childhood special education (EI/ECSE) program in Lane County.

Re: HB5016 Grant in Aid Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education

I want to share a few key points related to the coordination between EI/ECSE programs and early learning hubs in local communities and the impacts and benefits experienced as communities develop comprehensive early learning systems.

EI/ECSE programs are involved with the development and implementation of early learning hubs in all communities across Oregon-- often in leadership positions. In the Lane Early Learning Alliance (Lane County's early learning hub) I am on the Governance Consortium and I am the Strategic Advisor to the work of the Alliance.

One of the immediate ways the work of the early learning hubs impacts EI/ECSE programs is by increasing referrals for children under 3 years of age. The early learning hubs have a shared metric with CCOs to increase the rates of developmental screening for children under 3 years of age. This is fantastic! It means that children who need help are being identified earlier and earlier and referred to services that will provide help. EI/ECSE is the program that receives referrals from physicians when a developmental delay is suspected or identified. EI/ECSE programs have already seen increases in referrals and anticipate more.

In my program over the past 4-5 years, EI age children (birth to 3 years old) have accounted for 22-24% of the total number of birth to 5 year old children we serve. This past December census EI children accounted for 34% of the children we serve. This represents a 10-12% increase over last year. That indicates we are finding children earlier. This increase matches the increases we are seeing each quarter in the rates of children screened by physicians under the age of 3 in Lane County as reported by Trillium our CCO

EI/ECSE programs cannot have wait lists because we are a federally mandated entitlement program. We need to serve all children as soon as they are identified as eligible. This process happens quickly, by law it cannot take longer than 45 calendar days. This is a good requirement and GREAT news for children and families, but we need to ensure EI/ECSE programs are adequately funded to address this need.

Over time there has been a steady decrease in the levels of services provided to EI/ECSE children and families. This was documented through reviews that were completed on child files statewide in 2004, 2007 and 2010. Again in 2013 the services reviewed on IFSPs were far below recommended service levels: 30.4% of infants and toddlers received recommended service levels, for preschool age children, 64% of low needs children, 7% of moderate needs children and 1.4% of high needs children received recommended levels of service to meet their needs. We need to prevent a further reduction in service levels to EI/ECSE children and ensure children get their needs met by increasing funding to reflect growth.

Another area that has experienced an increase in opportunities for collaboration between EI/ECSE programs and early learning hubs has been around the efforts of the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) to increase the numbers of quality child care and preschool settings in every community. These quality settings provide opportunities for children with developmental delays and disabilities to learn with their typical peers. In Oregon approximately 70% of children 5 and under who are eligible for EI/ECSE services receive some of their services in a regular early childhood setting.

EI/ECSE professionals provide training, coaching and support to childcare providers so they can learn how to successfully include children with special needs in their homes and centers. This is a win-win for child care providers and for children with and without special needs. The demand for training, coaching and support from EI/ECSE providers increases as more and more child care providers seek to improve the quality of their early learning environments. Again this increases the demands on EI/ECSE programs.

The last point I want to share is that the Early Learning Council and the State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC) EI/ECSE have met numerous times to make recommendations regarding coordination between the Early Learning Division and the early learning hubs and EI/ECSE programs. Many concrete recommendations have been made and many are already in the process of implementation. It is a wonderful example of how early learning services and supports are working **together to become a cohesive system of services and supports**. If you would like to read the details in the report I have provided the web address. <http://oregonearlylearning.com/early-learning-council/resources-publications-and-reports/>

This is an exciting and encouraging time for the youngest Oregonians!  
I urge you to approve increased funding for EI/ECSE programs.

If you have questions please contact me  
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