

Lane Early Learning Alliance

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Chair Sara Gelser
Oregon Senate Human Services and Early Childhood Committee
900 Court St NE, S-405
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Chair Sara Gelser, Vice Chair Olsen and Members of the Committee,

As the backbone support organization for the Lane Early Learning Alliance, United Way of Lane County is pleased to submit testimony in support of SB 213. SB 213 makes the Early Learning Hubs permanent and continues the work local communities have undertaken to align early learning systems, support thriving families and ensure children are ready to succeed in kindergarten.

We know our community has approximately 7,000 underserved children. These children are less likely to receive services and supports and more likely to struggle in school as a result. It is our responsibility to close this opportunity gap and give all children the best chances for success.

Our community has firsthand experience with the capacity for change that Early Learning Hubs present. Working with OSLC Developments, Incorporated and the Creswell and Eugene 4J school districts using funding provided through the Kindergarten Partnership and Innovation grant, this past summer we were able to begin scaling an evidence-based school readiness program that has been proven to increase the early literacy and social emotional skills of kindergarteners, the Kids in Transition to School (KITS) program.

The KITS program has been shown in randomized clinical efficacy trials to improve children's early literacy and social emotional skills prior to kindergarten. Gains continue to positively affect the children's adjustment in kindergarten and first grade. Additionally, parents' skills improve and this leads to increases in parent involvement in the children's schooling. The KITS program has worked with dual language learners and their parents as well as families from a range of ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. United Way of Lane County, and now the Lane Early Learning Alliance, has a long history of successfully partnering with the KITS program and local school districts to provide this summer learning opportunity.

Developed at the Oregon Social Learning Center, the KITS program is a 16-week school readiness intervention for children and their parents that takes place in the summer eight weeks prior to kindergarten entry and afterschool for the first eight of school. The KITS program provides a boost to entering kindergartners' literacy, self-regulation, and social skills through a 24 session school readiness group for the children and a 12 session workshop for the parents.

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KITS is one component of the Lane Early Learning Alliance's comprehensive approach to closing the opportunity gap early. For example, through our Early Literacy grant efforts we have also:

- Trained over 100 local early learning providers in evidence-based early literacy curricula;
- Established a book rotation program that currently serves 350 parents through our network of school-based Family Resource Centers and 60 child care providers through our local Child Care Resource and Referral agency;
- Distributed over 2,000 books to children through our three Summer Reading Spots program held in local parks in conjunction with Food for Lane County's Summer Lunch Program.

The Lane Early Learning Alliance also has robust efforts underway to ensure that all children receive at least one developmental screening before age three. In the short time that our hub has been operating and in partnership with our local Coordinated Care Organization, Trillium Community Health Plan, the developmental screening rate has jumped from 17% to 40%. Community partners are working to ensure that not only do children receive this screening, but more importantly, are connected to the community resources and supports to address their needs.

We have done significant work in the community to build relationships and create the infrastructure of a true early learning system. I urge your support of this locally driven work and SB 213.

Sincerely,



Noreen J. Dunnells
Executive Director
United Way of Lane County



Holly Mar-Conte
Director of Education
United Way of Lane County