



Early Childhood & Elementary Education Department
114 S. Bartlett Street
Medford, OR 97501

March 13, 2015

Senator Sara Gelser, Chair
Senator Alan Olsen, Vice Chair
Senate Human Services and Early Childhood Committee

Dear Senators Gelser and Kruse:

As the Department Chair for Early Childhood and Elementary Education at Rogue Community College and someone very interested in the welfare and future success of all children/youth in the region, I am writing to urge your support of permanent funding for Early Learning Hubs as specified in Senate Bill 213. The redesign of early childhood services and the creation of Regional Hubs have brought into the spotlight the importance of services for children birth to six years and their families. In a December 2014 address to policy makers at a White House Summit, James Heckman, Nobel Prize winning economist, provided evidence of the value of investing in early childhood education and care. This investment promotes improved health, greater success in school, enhanced skills for the work force and a vibrant and healthy society while enacting a 10:1 lifelong return on the investment.

In its short contracted history, Southern Oregon Early Learning Services (SOELS), the regional Early Learning Hub serving Jackson and Josephine Counties, has initiated a series of projects and programs in response to unique conditions in the region and a commitment to the accomplishment of state outcomes; school readiness, family stability, and system efficiency and effectiveness. Building on the solid partnerships that characterize our region, SOELS is engaging service providers and programs to identify resources and supports and then collaborate in bringing them to children and families throughout the region. Of note is the special focus on children who have not received the services they need and thus face greater challenges for success.

A variety of projects, utilizing proven practices, have been initiated as a result of the efforts of the Southern Oregon Early Learning Services Hub. Some of these are as follows.

- Partnerships with six elementary schools and their surrounding child care centers and homes to align and coordinate early childhood services with the kindergarten expectation = enhanced readiness for kindergarten and improved performance on the Kindergarten Assessment
- A broad Home Visiting Network bringing services into the homes for infants and young children and their parents = needed information, support, and parenting strategies that enhance the health and development of their children
- A Josephine County-wide project that provides books for families and child care centers and guidance for parents and teachers in using effective literacy strategies = a strong foundation for learning to read.

Long-term success for such programs and collaborative partnerships is dependent upon continued funding and will require legislative commitment to a long-term investment in young children in our state. Ultimately it will improve the high school graduation rate, movement on to higher education, future employment opportunities for today's children in their future. Thank you for your consideration in support of Senate Bill 213.

Sincerely,

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