



**Douglas County Partners  
for Student Success**

SB 213: Early Learning Hubs

Senate Human Services and Early Childhood Committee

March 12, 2015

Chair Sara Gelser, Vice Chair Olsen and Members of the Committee,

For the record, I am Gwen Soderberg-Chase, Executive Director for Douglas County Partners for Student Success (DCPSS), a Regional Achievement Collaborative with the mission to transform the way our community works together collectively to accomplish common goals targeted at a healthy, positive future for each child in Douglas County. We are committed to the following goals and accepting collective responsibility for the success of all children in our region, especially those who are typically underserved.

We are committed to these goals:

Each child in Douglas County:

- Is Healthy and Ready for Kindergarten
- Has Supports In and Out of School to be Successful
- Leaves High School Ready for Post-Secondary Education and/or Career
- Completes a Post-Secondary Degree, Career Credential or training needed for personal well-being

I am submitting 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.

The work of our South Central Oregon Early Learning Hub and Hubs all across the state is essential to the children and families of Douglas, Klamath and Lake Counties. The social, emotional, health and cognitive foundations set in the early years of a child's life has significant impact on the vitality of one's life as an adult. We are reminded over and over again that the investment we make to ensure all children are provided with a strong start in life will result in healthier, productive and engaged adults and vibrant communities for the future. We can pay now or pay later. It takes leaders across multiple sectors representing all agencies impacting

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the lives of children, to work together to reach the end goal. Early Learning Hubs are just beginning their work to make this vision a reality and must be supported in the future to truly make the difference we have set out to make.

The SCOELH is already making great gains in creating new partnerships across K-12 schools, early education, health, human services and business that will change the way we currently support young children and families in our region and lead to more effective and efficient services. For example, the Kindergarten Readiness Partnership and Innovation program, funded by the Early Learning Division of ODE is now engaging all districts in Douglas County in shared work related to Kindergarten Readiness. In addition, to state funds, The Ford Family Foundation has stepped up to add to the funding of the project. As stated by Gillian Wesenberg, Director of the South-Central Oregon Early Learning Hub, “This project will promote better outcomes for Douglas County’s youngest children through a seamless, holistic framework. It will offer all districts and schools opportunities for successful response to the needs of families, smart and efficient use of public and private resources, and effective preparation of young children for kindergarten and future success. With a coordinated, systemic approach, families and communities are better able to prepare their children for a lifetime of learning.”

SCOELH is also a recipient of an Early Literacy Grant which has provided books to schools and agencies across Douglas County to distribute to young children as well as training and support for implementing dialogic reading strategies in multiple environments across the county serving youth at the pre-school age. The Early Literacy Grant has brought together parents and providers of pre-school education in a common bond to impact the reading skills of children using strategies that are consistently applied. This shared commitment is unprecedented and represents the power of the Hubs to make a difference. We anxiously await the data that will tell the story, illustrating the impact of the work.

Without reservation, DCPSS believes strengthening early learning through the Hubs will benefit children, families and our region and set the foundation needed for each to experience bright futures. I urge your support of SB 213.

Respectfully,

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