



**IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE
COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION**

MISSION:
TO PROMOTE THE INTEGRATION OF
REFUGEES, IMMIGRANTS, AND THE
COMMUNITY AT LARGE INTO A SELF-
SUFFICIENT, HEALTHY AND INCLUSIVE
MULTIETHNIC SOCIETY.

www.irco.org

IRCO LOCATIONS:

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**IRCO East Portland
Community Center (EPCC)**
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**IRCO Mid County
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SB 213: Early Learning Hubs

Senate Human Services and Early Childhood Committee

March 6, 2015

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

For the record, I am Lee Po Cha, Associate Director of the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization (IRCO). I am submitting testimony in support of SB 213 which makes the Early Learning Hubs permanent. SB 213 continues the work local communities have undertaken to align early learning systems, support thriving families and ensure children are ready to succeed in kindergarten.

IRCO's mission is to promote the integration of refugees, immigrants, and the community at large into a self-sufficient, healthy, and inclusive multiethnic society. We have a reputation for excellence built for almost 40 years providing culturally specific wraparound services to diverse communities of all ages.

There is a strong need for culturally specific services for the rapidly growing number of immigrant and refugee families with young children in our region. We know that the children of these families are less likely to access preventative health care or early childhood/pre-kindergarten learning environments.

Our local Early Learning Hub helps fund IRCO's Parent and Child Development Services (PCDS) providing parenting, child development, and brain development education for immigrant and refugee families. Our certified parent educators visit with families in their homes or other safe spaces, answer questions, offer positive parenting advice, and connect families with community resources.

We partner with our local Early Learning Hub through an Early Literacy grant. We created Russian and Vietnamese culturally-specific materials for our families with young children to support them as they play, sing, write, read and talk together and prepare for school success. Our parents from the Somali, Russian and Vietnamese communities participate in the hub's Parent Accountability Council with parents from three other culturally-specific communities. The Early Learning Hub funds our staff to provide support for the parents as they grow in leadership skills and provide guidance for the hub's decisions and priorities.

Our Early Learning Hub utilizes the wisdom and resources of committed individuals and organizations to eliminate racial and ethnic disparities, address economic barriers, and align quality supports for young children and their families. We appreciate the opportunity to be a part of an expansive partnership that prioritizes our community and draws together human services, health care, schools, housing, families and community-based organizations to empower communities, families, and individuals so they can become self-sufficient and contributing members of society.

Strengthening early learning through the hubs will benefit children, families and our region. I urge your support of SB 213.

Sincerely,



Lee Po Cha
Associate Director

