

To: Senate Human Services and Early Childhood Committee

From: Roberta Weber, Ph.D
Faculty Research Associate, Oregon State University

Re: Support of SB 214

Dear Chair Gelser, Vice Chair Olsen, and members of the Committee,

I am Bobbie Weber, a Faculty Research Associate in the Family Policy Program at Oregon State University and support the passage of Senate Bill 213. The university has no position on this bill. I also serve on Oregon's Early Learning Council. In both roles my work focuses on supporting parents and their young children so that they can have success and we can have the society that each of us desires.

One of the most promising strategies for reaching our shared goal of all children ready for success in school and life is the network of Early Learning Hubs created by the Oregon Legislature. The research base for this strategy goes under many names including Collective Impact or community system performance but what they all share is engagement of multiple community sectors in achieving limited but essential goals. Early research findings support this strategy which provides the foundation of Oregon's Early Learning Hubs.

Almost half of Oregon's children are born into families facing one or more stressors which research has shown place children at risk. Yet, working together communities can change the odds, providing support early and in ways that can make a difference. Oregon cannot afford to continue offering services in a non-integrated manner so that families must learn how to put services together to get the support they and their children need. The Early Learning Hubs have already demonstrated that providers can and do change in order to be driven by what families need rather than focusing on the services they provide.

Oregon cannot afford to continue operating in old ways. There are too many children and families in need of support and these families have too many needs. We need a strategy that can both reach targeted families and deliver integrated services that can make a difference. Research documents that the strategy embodied in Oregon's Early Learning Hubs produces improved outcomes. Early results from the Hubs now operating across the state demonstrate that communities are ready and able to change. I urge you to make Early Learning Hubs permanent by passing Senate Bill 213.