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To: Senate Human Services & Early Childhood Committee
From: Swati Adarkar, President & CEO, Children's Institute
Date: March 17, 2015
Re: Senate Bill 213

Chair Gelsler and members of the committee:

The Children's Institute supports Senate Bill 213 to strengthen and support Oregon's Early Learning Hubs. The Early Learning Hubs, through their local coordination and alignment of early learning services, are an important piece in Oregon's development of a strong early learning system.

The Children's Institute is a policy and advocacy organization that works to ensure all Oregon children are prepared for kindergarten and 3rd grade success. We support an expansion of high-quality early learning services from birth through age 8 to ensure the achievement gap is addressed cost-effectively and that more low-income children and children of color receive high-quality early learning services well before kindergarten. In order for all kids to be healthy, ready for kindergarten, and succeeding by third grade, Oregon must invest in a seamless and aligned early learning system.

The state Early Learning Hubs play a crucial connective role in delivering early learning services to communities with high need. They do this in collaboration with many sectors, including: K-12, health, early education, human services, and business. Additional investment in the Early Learning Hubs would allow them to deepen and improve existing early learning strategies, and would also ensure that the Hubs are working towards measurable early education outcomes.

A seamless and aligned early learning system would also support strong connections between early learning and the early grades. The Kindergarten Partnership & Innovation Fund (KPIF) provides just that bridge in 16 communities across Oregon by delivering strategies like parent engagement, kindergarten transition, and bringing early childhood providers and early elementary teachers together for cross-sector development. The KPIF has a strong connection to the Early Learning Hubs and we believe high-quality services go hand-in-hand with high-functioning Early Learning Hubs to ensure improved child, family, and community level outcomes.

Research shows that in order for us to improve 3rd grade reading outcomes, we must start as early as possible and do our best to ensure high-quality services and delivery mechanisms. An expanded investment in preschool available to a diverse group of providers is another opportunity for partnership between quality service providers and local implementation through the Early Learning Hubs. The Hubs, and the opportunity for collaboration they represent, are a crucial part of the creation of a robust early learning system that supports all children from birth through third grade. We urge you to maximize the effectiveness of the state Early Learning Hubs by supporting Senate Bill 213.

Sincerely,

Swati Adarkar
President/CEO