

Email: gruss@teleport.com

Website: <http://www.georgerussellassociates.com>

April 8, 2015

Dear Representatives Doherty, Frederick, Sprenger, Barreto, Hack, McLain, Piluso, Reardon and Wilson:

On April 10, the Education Committee will have an important hearing concerning the proposed legislation to improve and expand preschool in Oregon in **House Bill 3380**. Our **Ready for School Leaders Panel** members have a strong history of championing increased investments in early learning for the state's youngest and most vulnerable children. I am writing to you today to request your vote in support of this important legislation.

House Bill 3380 is among the top priorities for our Ready for School campaign this legislative session. The bill sets common, high-quality standards for preschool programs (including Head Start, community-based preschools and those in K-12 schools) and will allow Oregon to reach more low-income children in a variety of settings. The Oregon Head Start Association, the Children's Institute, and the Early Learning Division of the Oregon Department of Education have been working collaboratively for months to craft this legislation. We collectively support recent proposed amendments to the bill. Along with passage of the bill, we are advocating that the Legislature invest \$30 million in additional funding during the 2015-2017 biennium to provide high-quality preschool to more low-income children.

We know that high-quality preschool works. It closes the opportunity gaps and gets children ready for kindergarten and on track for 3rd grade success. Yet, Oregon continues to fail its youngest children.

- Nationally, we are in the bottom quarter of all states for access to preschool for four-year-olds, enrolling only 10%.
- Our Head Start pre-K program has funding for serving only about 55% of eligible children.
- 72% of 3- and 4-year-olds from low-income families in Oregon – about 32,000 children – don't have access to high-quality preschool.

House Bill 3380, along with a modest investment, would 1) begin building a preschool system that aligns with Head Start, while also allowing for a mix of other early childhood providers; 2) set quality standards, while ensuring preschool services are connected with our K-12 system; and, 3) serve an additional 1,500 Oregon children each year. The research is clear that a strong early start is critical in laying the foundation for a child's future success and increasing the odds for students' graduating high school and being college or career ready.

RE: HB 3380
Education Committee-House of Representatives
April 8, 2015

I am writing to express my strong support for this important legislation and for the increased investment in preschool. I am asking you to show your support by voting in support of HB 3380.

Thank you for everything you do to make Oregon a better place for all children.

Sincerely,


George Russell, *Education & Management Consultant*

- Ready for School Leaders Panel
- Children's Institute Board
- Lane Early Learning Alliance