

August 20, 2018

Oregon State Joint Interim Committee on Student Success
Salem, Oregon

Dear Leaders of the Joint Interim Committee on Student Success:

As business leader members of ReadyNation Oregon, we write to thank you for your work during this past legislative session and to urge you to maximize the impact of your interim committee's work on student success. There are three early childhood programs that can help build a strong foundation for Oregon's children and yield great returns in K-12 schooling and later in life. These investments will ultimately lead to a stronger workforce and economy for our state.

There is scientific consensus that brain development from birth to age five sets the foundation for children's future success. During these years, more than one million new neural connections form every second. Thus, it is essential that child care consist of responsive, quality environments that nurture early brain development. High-quality child care is not only important to Oregon's children and families, but to the state's economy as well. In Oregon, the child care sector employs almost 19,000 people and generates \$403.6 million in revenue. With continued support from the legislature, this sector could grow further to reach those who still do not have access to the child care their families need.

One investment that pays incredible dividends for years to come, is voluntary home visiting. Parents are a child's first teachers, and some parents are more well-equipped than others for this responsibility. With advice and coaching from trained professionals, new parents can have better interactions with their children from pregnancy to age five. One program that operates in Oregon, Healthy Families Oregon, is a multi-site statewide program that strengthens a nurturing parent-child relationship. This relationship promotes growth and development allowing the baby to be healthy, safe and learn. Home visiting programs also cut public spending on healthcare by reducing low birthweight, infant mortality, and emergency room visits.

Many at-risk students who do not have access to early childhood education show deficits from the first day of kindergarten and are never able to catch up to their peers. In 2015, only 34% of Oregon's fourth graders were at or above the proficient level in reading. High-quality preschool programs, like Oregon's Pre-Kindergarten (OPK) and Pre-K Promise, can help to bridge the vocabulary gap seen between young children of professional parents and those receiving welfare. Children who attended Chicago's CPC preschool program were more likely to graduate from high school, and attend college.

In order to succeed fully in academics and careers, Oregon's students need to have a strong foundation built in their early years. For these reasons, **we urge you to include early childhood programs in your recommendations to support student success in Oregon.**

Sincerely,

Martha Brooks
State Director
ReadyNation Oregon

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