

September 26, 2018

Rep. Barbara Smith Warner, Co-Chair
Rep. Greg Smith, Co-Chair
Students Ready & Able to Learn Work Group
Joint Committee on Student Success
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: 2019 Policy Recommendations

Dear Reps. Smith Warner and Smith,

I am writing today on behalf of the Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA) representing nearly 22,000 school employees from across the state working in Head Start programs, student nutrition, student transportation, classrooms, school libraries and other support roles.

Below are concerns and suggested solutions gathered from OSEA-represented educators working in Head Start programs. This perspective is important because though Early Learning Hubs have been invited to participate in the work of the Joint Committee on Student Success, Head Start educators have not.

Problem 1: According to Rick Crager, Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Administration with ODE in a memo dated March 27, 2017, based on their 2015-17 funding estimates, the Oregon Pre-kindergarten (OPK) and Head Start programs served an estimated 13,877 children. That only represents 63.7 percent of the eligible population of 21,789.

Solution: Provide the necessary funding for the estimated eligible and unserved population to receive services.

Problem 2: The Preschool Promise program was established by HB 3380 (2015) and serves preschool age children in families with incomes at or below 200% of the federal poverty line. The program's intent is to leverage high quality, local and culturally relevant child care and education programs. An unintended consequence of the Preschool Promise program is that high quality Head Start teachers are shifting over to the Preschool Promise program for better paid positions. This issue coupled with the fall off of high quality Head Start teachers to full-day kindergarten exacerbates the issue of retention.

Solution: According to Rick Crager, Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Administration with ODE in a memo dated March 27, 2017, the average cost per child in the OPK Program is \$8,907.

To retain high quality Head Start educators and eliminate the discrepancy in pay, we suggest increasing the amount allocated per student to allow Head Start to offer pay equity for educators across the Early Head Start, Head Start and Preschool Promise programs.

Problem 3: According to the websites for the Head Start programs listed below, there are a total of 21 vacant positions (teachers, aides, drivers and cooks) at a crucial time in the school year. Full-time Head Start teacher salaries tend to be at the top of the range when compared to other roles in the program and yet, as you can see below, they are hardly paid enough to afford paying for student loan debt, health care, rent and groceries.

Clackamas County Children's Commission 2016-17 Starting Salaries Teacher with a B.A. \$15.72/hour
NeighborImpact 2016-17 Starting Salaries Teacher Advocate II \$15.27/hour
Head Start of Lane County 2017-18 Starting Salaries Teacher with a B.A. \$14.12/hour

Solution: Offer fair salaries for work and explore other creative compensation for Head Start educators to be able to afford to do this work including, but not limited to, health care and housing subsidies or state sponsored student loan debt forgiveness.

Sincerely,



Soren Metzger
Government Relations Specialist