

March 15, 2017

TO: Ways and Means Education Subcommittee, Oregon Legislature

FROM: Julie Young, Board Chair, The Children's Institute
1001 NW Lovejoy St. #410
Portland, OR 97209

RE: March 15 Hearing on Early Childhood Budget

Esteemed Senators and Representatives:

I am a retired clinical social worker who has for the past 10 years focused my volunteer time and charitable giving on investments in early childhood to improve the odds for thousands of children in Oregon. Why? For three reasons:

- 1) I saw in my work as a social worker in community mental health that the cycle of poverty, including unemployment or underemployment, domestic violence, substance abuse, stable housing, hunger insecurity, and criminal justice involvement is REAL. My #1 takeaway was that public policies and strategies must be *upstream* and *evidence-based*.
- 2) Research has shown, time and again, that investing early is economically smart; the rate of return is 13%. Early investments, including investments in high-quality preschool, increase the chance of successful high school completion, becoming a productive and healthy adult, and staying out of the criminal justice system.
- 3) Early childhood presents an ideal opportunity to include parents and families in their children's development, and research clearly links parent engagement with a child's education success.

Oregon would be wise to invest in *every* child beginning at birth and there are multiple paths to do this, including prenatal care, home visiting programs, child abuse prevention and intervention services, Employment Related Daycare, and systems that insure a quality early childhood workforce, higher salaries to attract and retain experienced teachers, and alignment between early childhood programs and the K-12 system (e.g., the Kindergarten Partnership and Innovation Fund).

As members of the Ways and Means Education Subcommittee you are key in not only preserving investments made in previous Legislative sessions, but strengthening those investments to reach more babies, more toddlers, more preschoolers, more families who want their children to succeed just as you and I want the children in our families to succeed.

As you consider the education budget, I implore you to remember the early years! Education must include high-quality preschool, i.e., Oregon Head Start Pre-Kindergarten and Preschool Promise programs. Please invest a minimum of \$30 million dollars to serve additional children – and watch your investment grow!

Thank you for your service,

Julie Young, MSW