

March 15, 2017

Joint Ways and Means Education Subcommittee

Joint Ways And Means Subcommittee on Education: Funding for Early Learning Programs in SB 5516

Co-Chair Monroe, Co-Chair Smith Warner and Members of the Committee:

My name is Lisa Harnisch and I am the Executive Director of the Marion & Polk Early Learning Hub. I am writing in strong support of the early learning system overall and strongly urge that the funding be continued, at minimum, at current service levels in early learning programs contained in the Governor's Recommended Budget and SB 5516.

As region, the Marion & Polk Early Learning Hub and its partners have been able to make gains in the overarching goal of kindergarten readiness. And, as a community we have partnered together develop more comprehensive services to meet the needs of children and families furthest from opportunity. We are fierce in application of the equity lens and using data to drive the decisions on resources allocation and strategies development to ensure that we are delivering services and improving outcomes for families. To do this work, we have created a governance structure that brings together different sectors including health, early learning, K12 & higher education, business, parents, and social services. We have launched a variety of strategies to meet the needs of the community and work to meet the identified metrics and desired outcomes. We leverage and blend together funding and resources to expand the impact to the system.

Together, as a hub region, we have been able to:

- *Launch **Preschool Promise*** enrolling 330 children in a program that will meet the family's need. This program is for families up to 200% of the federal poverty level. Preschool Promise is available a variety of settings, including family child care, Tribal program, Head Start, culturally based programs, and school districts.
- *Expand **Kindergarten Partnership and Innovation*** – in 31 communities we are bringing together early learning and kindergarten teachers to learn from each other. We are also engaging with families through **evidence based parent education** and other opportunities for families to connect with schools.

- *Increase **quality early learning environments** with our child care providers achieving star ratings on the *Quality Rating Improvement System/Spark*.*
- *Increase by 11% the number of children receiving a developmental screen (Ages and Stages Questionnaire) by the age of 3.*
- *Build capacity of trainers delivering **evidence based and research based parent education**, such as *Abriendo Puertas, Nurturing Parenting, Mind in the Making, Daddy Boot Camp*, and more.*
- *Partner with national initiatives, such as **Vroom**, to provide additional resources and tools to families.*
- *Connect **families with resources** in the community and meet emergent needs through flexible funds.*
- *Build **partnerships** with our **higher education institutions**, such as **Chemeketa Community College and Western Oregon University**, to support the workforce development of early childhood professionals by building a higher education pathway.*

This is long-term work and must be sustained to realize the fullest potential. This investment is part of the P-20 continuum. This is a budget-challenged legislative session for sure. Please continue to make an investment that will continue to grow for generations by focusing on early learning.

I would be happy to answer specific questions or share further information as needed.

Sincerely,

Lisa Harnisch
Executive Director