



SB 5516: Early Learning Division/Programs Budget

Joint Ways and Means Education Subcommittee

March 15, 2017

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

For the record, I am Jenn Richter, and I am the Early Learning Program Administrator with Yamhill CCO, the backbone organization for our early learning hub in Yamhill County. I am submitting testimony in support of continuing service level funding for the many early learning programs that support healthy families and ensure children arrive at kindergarten ready to succeed.

We believe the most important investment Oregon can make is in our future. The legislature has made important and deliberate investments in early learning infrastructure in recent sessions, and we must continue to protect this new funding. These investments have led to increased quality, increased access, more efficient and effective use of public funds, and better engagement of young families throughout the early years of their children's lives. The Yamhill Early Learning Hub, like all hubs, helps to extend the effectiveness of the state's investment in early learning programs by reducing duplication of services. The Hub structure allows complementary services to be embedded together in ways that promise to be exponentially beneficial.

For example, in Yamhill County several community partners have come together under the umbrella of the Hub to address challenges in Sheridan, where 20% of the community lives below the poverty level. Oregon Kindergarten Assessment Scores for 2016 show that these kids are nearly 7% behind the state average in approaches to learning, 10% behind in math, and a full 26% behind in letter sound recognition. By third grade less than one-quarter of them are reading at grade level. A full 40% of our youth from Sheridan are not graduating from high school on time – a stunning statistic, to say the least.

We know that the socioemotional skills of incoming kindergarteners are the strongest predictor of their eventual success, both in school and in life. And the stability of a child's family is a key factor in developing strong socioemotional skills.

To address this, the Early Learning Hub in Yamhill County is supporting a Family Resource Center through Lutheran Community Services within Sheridan School District. While this is a new program and thus has no outcome data yet, we know that the programs it offers – including home visiting and parent education – have been repeatedly proven to provide high returns on investment.



Yamhill Community Care Organization
Your Local Health Partner

This center will also have a diaper bank to draw parents in and will receive technical support as needed from the CCO's Community Health Worker Hub so that families are connected to services that support whole person wellness. The outreach worker will also be connecting families to school readiness services, such as Ready! for Kindergarten workshops. By embedding services for early childhood within the school district, we are seeking to address the negative associations many parents have with school from their own younger days and to help them see the school as partners with them in parenting.

While the school district, the CCO, and Lutheran Community Services would continue to operate without the presence of the Hub, it's the Hub that brings them together in this joint venture both by providing funding to support the additional outreach worker but even more importantly by providing the platform on which community partners can engage in important conversations regarding how we can most efficiently and effectively serve our families and our communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify about the impact the state's investment in early learning is having on my community. Thank you for your commitment to our youngest children and to programs that support and strengthen their families to help prepare them for success in school and in life.