**hub inc.**

MARION & POLK EARLY LEARNING HUB

April 5, 2017

**House Committee on Early Childhood and Family Supports**

**Re: HB 3067**

Dear Chair Lively, Vice Chair Hack, Vice Chair Piluso and Members of the Committee:

As Executive Director of the Marion & Polk Early Learning Hub, I am writing is support of HB 3067 to establish a Court Care Program in Marion and Polk Counties. Should this be funded, we will be able to provide a needed service for children and their families in our community. This will establish the ability to provide a safe and nurturing place for children while parents or guardians attend court related business in Marion and Polk counties.

This program will provide an opportunity to connect with families that may not otherwise be connected with services. In providing a place for children to be in a stress-free and developmentally appropriate environment, it will reduce family stress, and be a much healthier environment than the court room.

In addition this will also allow families, who may not otherwise, be made aware of or connected with important services that are designed to meet the developmental needs of children to be more ready for kindergarten when they arrive; such as, but not limited to Preschool Promise, Head Start, Early Head Start, and Relief Nursery. Families will also have the opportunity to learn about services or resources designed to support family stability.

Families in our communities face a variety of stressors. Our court system is designed for adults to deal with legal proceedings that are challenging and not designed with children in mind. Families often do not have choices or resources for child care and are forced to bring them to the courthouse. The program that HB 3067 establishes will protect children from witnessing court proceedings, and will allow the litigants, court staff, and others associated with the court proceeding to give their full attention in the court procedures.

We owe it to our children to be as free as possible from these stressors where they have no voice or choice.

Sincerely,

Lisa Harnisch
Executive Director