

April 13, 2017

Representative John Lively  
Representative Jodi Hack  
Representative Carla Piluso  
Representative Janelle Bynum  
Representative Cedric Hayden  
Representative John Huffman  
Representative Alissa Keny-Guyer  
Representative Sheri Malstrom  
Representative David Brock Smith

RE: HB 3069, submitted via email to [hecfs.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov](mailto:hecfs.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov)

Dear Chair Lively and Members of the House Committee on Early Childhood & Family Supports,

My name is Kelly Starkey and I have been living here in Portland for the past three years. Although I don't have children myself I have become very involved with early childhood education in Portland because I strongly believe that we thrive as a community when everyone has education and opportunity and I am saddened by the sheer number of children and families who do not have access to these services.

I am writing today to support HB 3069, creating the Early Learning Equity Fund.

Oregon's population is changing rapidly – more than 35% of babies born in 2014 are children of color, and in several Oregon counties, a majority of children under 5 are children of color. State funding for early learning has not kept pace with these changes. As Oregon becomes more diverse, it's imperative that our state invest in culturally-specific programs that lead to better outcomes for children of color.

Expanded state funding for important early learning programs that provide more options for families, such as Juntos Aprendemos and Head Start, are critical to our community. And, we see opportunity to strengthen the state's portfolio of early learning services through the creation of the Early Learning Equity Fund to support culturally specific early learning and parent education services. The Early Learning Equity fund created by HB 3069 would provide grants to culturally specific organizations with a track record of reaching, retaining and supporting children of color and their families. This investment would be an important starting point to

reaching more families who are currently left behind by existing programming.

As a Partner at Social Venture Partners I have had the opportunity to look at the numbers and to meet with families who are impacted by programs such as these. The research shows that culturally specific programs have a higher chance of life long impact, and programs like Juntos Aprendemos that focus on both the parent and child are even more impactful. By providing funding to a broader range of programs, and enabling families to share in the educational opportunities being offered we raise up not just the child, but the family and by extension their whole support system.

As someone who was raised in a middle class home, and who is surrounded by the children of friends and family, it is impossible to imagine a childhood without books. Or going into the Kindergarten classroom with absolutely no skills or tools that are built during the pre-school experience. Oregon's next generation will become our leaders and our communities of color deserve to have the same opportunities to learn, grow and lead as those in more wealthy communities.

Sincerely,

Kelly Starkey