

S.P.I.R.I.T.S.

Strategies for Prevention, Intervention and Resilience, in Teaching for Success



Suzie Kuerschner

*FASD Consul. & Trainer, Early Int. & Spec. Ed. Consult. & Prog. Dev.
Early Child. Ed. Consult. & Prog. Dev.; Child. Dev. Spec.*

Phone: 503-622-3973 Fax: 503-622-4881

suziekuerschner@gmail.com

February 8, 2018

To: House Committee on Early Childhood and Family Supports
Representative John Lively, Chair

Chair Lively, Member of the Committee:

My name is Suzie Kuerschner and I have had the privilege of being an Early Intervention Specialist and am currently the FASD Consultant and Education Mode Coordinator for the Future Generations Collaborative. The FGC is a Multnomah County and Urban Native Community collaborative seeking to diminish both the incidence and the impact of FASD within our families, schools and community. Early Intervention has demonstrated consistent, compelling evidence that "earlier is better," however the current gap in services resulting from the change of an IFSP to an IEP might suggest otherwise. HB 4067 and its goal to identify and to deliver seamless transition from IFSPs to IEPs reinforces the heart and soul of the original Early Intervention HB 2021 in which early services were projected to flow in a continual delivery through the IEP. HB 4067 language advances this perspective and the contextual understanding of **Developmental Delays** as an eligibility criterion to be maintained throughout the IEP process. The positive impacts of Early Intervention's holistic approach are well documented and have resulted in collaborative intersect with other systems and providers in a manner that has successfully wrapped around children and families for positive developmental outcomes. Its history of understanding environmental and relational factors is founded on principles of family and community support. Without the proposed seamless transition, the shift from family focused IFSP to child focused IEP may be abrupt and should therefore be considered as a component of the transitional process.

HB 4067's proposed inclusion of **Developmental Delays** within the IEP will provide a profound opportunity within all domains of development for early elementary school children and their families. The absence of **Developmental Delays** as an IEP eligibility criterion has impacted many of those previously served and often precludes the identification of services for early elementary success at a time when that support is most critical. Certainly, inclusion of

Developmental Delays will save both the time and money of eligibility acrobatics, but perhaps most importantly, inclusion of **Development Delays** will fill a gap in identification and delivery of services whose absence can have a devastating consequence on these early elementary years, often translating to future school and life challenges. The FGC is particularly concerned for those children who were identified under an IFSP as **Developmentally Delayed** and/or those children who have not been previously identified. Children with an FASD are vulnerable to this gap. Most often these children are characterized by "hidden disabilities" which can present with confusing and confounding behavioral expressions and sensory, language and processing characteristics. The current Journal of the American Medical Association published a recent study in which it is estimated that 5% of school age children are impacted by an FASD. Historically, many of these young children go unidentified until serious academic and behavioral expressions occur sometime between third to sixth grade. If these children are identified they are served through EI/ECSE under the **Developmentally Delayed** category. After making significant gains they then may not be eligible for IEP service to sustain this growth. In addition to FASD there are other etiologies with mild expressions that have improved with Early Intervention, but cannot be sustained without that support. For those for those with brain based cognitive and behavioral challenges, without intervention their challenges and sense of failure can begin to become their identity for future school and life experience.

The Future Generations Collaborative recommends a due pass for this legislation.

Thank you so much for the thought and commitment you have all brought to HB 4067.

Suzie Kuerschner

