



Testimony
Oregon State Joint Ways & Means Education Sub-Committee
Early Childhood Budget 2019-2021
March 6, 2019
Capitol Building, Salem, OR

Participant for the record:

State Director Martha Brooks, Fight Crime: Invest In Kids & ReadyNation
17355 SW Sugar Plum Lane, Beaverton, OR 97007

Co-Chairs Frederick and McLain, members of the Committee. My name is Martha Brooks. I am the State Director of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids and ReadyNation, that are bi-partisan, non-profit organizations of senior law enforcement officials and business leaders with more than 200 members in Oregon. Our law enforcement members believe criminals must be put behind bars, but they are also dedicated to preventing crime by investing in proven programs that get kids started on the right track in life. Our business leaders yearn for a viable educated work force. Through investments in early childhood programs, both the members of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids and ReadyNation get what they want. And you, as public servants and guardians of the taxpayers' money, are to make wise investments.

I submit testimony today on behalf of the members to ask you to look at the investments for an early childhood continuum of services and make wise choices for early childhood programs such as:

- **Healthy Families Oregon**
- **Head Start/Oregon Pre-kindergarten**
- **PreK Promise**
- **Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education (EI/ECSE)**
- **Kindergarten Partnership and Innovation Fund**
- **Relief Nurseries**
- **HUB funding**
- **New Equity Fund**

It is a continuum of services from prenatal to age 5 that get kids ready for school and for life. Without one service, other services are incomplete. A continued commitment to early intervention and childhood services will continue to build a strong and supportive Early Learning network.

OREGON

We all have a commitment to do the very best we can for our kids and make those investments go as far as possible.

And why should we have that commitment? Consider these facts.

- 80-90% of brain development happens between zero and age 5.
- Nearly 50% of all child abuse and neglect cases happen between zero and 5 (48.7%).
- Yearly, approximately 45,000 babies are born in Oregon, yet we serve less than 20% of the 135,000 kids age zero to 3 eligible for home visiting.
- During the last biennium, the Healthy Families Oregon received no increase in budget.
- Each year we only serve approximately 25% of low-income children in pre-k.
- New parents struggle the most and yet we wait until later.

And yes, quality counts and is critical to success.

Why wait? We shouldn't.

- Returns on investments are the greatest in the early years. For every dollar invested \$3-\$17 is returned in the form of reduced crime, increased graduation rates, reduced special educational and social services programs and more.
- This is where we get the biggest bang for the buck.
- Without a foundation kids stumble again and again on their path to graduation.
- They start kindergarten already behind other kids and never catch up.
- Year after year after year – it feels we beg for the crumbs off the table for these programs.
- If you want Oregon to go from 49th in the nation – 2nd from the bottom – in graduation rates, this is where you should invest. If we don't get it right at the start, it costs more; takes longer and sometimes, the damage cannot be un-done.

What I can tell you is that investments early can solve a lot of social and emotional problems with kids, and investments early can pay back dividends at all ages – not just age 3 or 6 or 18 or 21, but well into adult life.

I worry about our children and I know you do too. What we need is to adequately fund the programs we have and what we already know works. Reducing funding at this early and critical juncture would be a big mistake and set progress back for our kids. Early childhood programs such as home visiting, pre-k, EI/ECSE, Relief Nurseries, HUBs, the Equity Fund and other early childhood interventions, need your support. Again, we ask you to invest in early childhood programs as your first investment in a continuum of services.