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To: Ways and Means Education Subcommittee members

From: Margaret J. Miller MD

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Medical Director at Juliette's House (Child Abuse Intervention Center of Yamhill County)

Member of the Yamhill County Early Learning Hub, as a medical representative

Re: Importance of investing in Early Childhood and the essential role ELH provides

I have had the privilege to work with children and families for over 30 years. It is apparent from my own observations and well supported by research that children's experiences in the first five years of their life are critical to their life's trajectory. This is the most important time for the child's brain development, not just for cognitive function but for social emotional development and learning self regulation and developing resiliency. This development is informed both through experiences and through modeling. The most important influence to any child is a healthy, stable, nurturing family. Programs that support families as well as children are essential. Children who are healthy, and are cognitively and emotionally stable are ready to learn as they start kindergarten. There is good evidence showing these children have improved school performance, fewer behavior problems, more self confidence and higher HS graduation rates. The life course of these students will include improved socioeconomic success, better physical and mental adult health outcomes and more engagement in their community. This is where the downstream investment pays off! We have research supporting these facts and evidence based programs to achieve these outcomes, but it does require our investment now!

The needs of young children and families cross many disciplinary boundaries. This is not just an education issue and not just a medicine issue, but needs a diverse representation of the community to offer expertise, coordinate services, prevent duplication of services and provide equity for all members of our community. The ELH with interdisciplinary representation has served this role well. In our county thru a centralized referral processes we are able to avoid duplication in home visiting services, and have been able to assign families with the greatest needs to the programs offering the most intensive services. The ELH has identified the area of the county with the highest needs and has begun to direct needed services to this area. Through our SIT teams, associated with the ELH and YCCO we are able to identify and help families with a specific issue to get them back on their feet and keep children safe and back in school. The ELH/YCCO has worked with public health, local clinics and the dental coalition to provide dental education, fluoride applications to young children and dental services to pregnant women.

The payback on investments in services for young children and families is not immediate but are real and born out well in repeated studies. The consequences of not supporting this vulnerable population is costly as we are seeing rising rates of mental health problems, criminal justice involvement and poverty. It is the right thing to do!

Thank you for your attention,
Margaret (Peg) J. Miller MD