



March 6, 2019

To Members of Oregon's Ways & Means Education Subcommittee:

As Board Chair of the state-wide Oregon Network of Child Abuse Intervention Centers (ONCAIC) and as the Chief Executive of Juliette's House, the designated CAIC in Yamhill County, I wish to speak with you about the importance of Early Learning Hubs, as well as, the Early Childhood Coalition Legislative Agenda.

As you may know, child abuse and serious neglect play major roles in both school readiness and school retention. A child who has been abused or being abused will always have difficulty in school, be it focusing or behavioral issues, and neglect comes in many forms, such as emotional, nutritional, or sleep deprivation.

The Hub in Yamhill County has keenly embraced the issues that our network of centers and, specifically, my agency deal with every day and infused some of our school-based prevention education into their programs, such as Head Start utilizing our *Safer, Smarter Kids* education training. This interactive and entertaining program helps provide vital, protective information and resiliency in preschoolers and with their parents, so as children enter school they are aware and better empowered to deal with issues like bullying, how to protect themselves, and emboldened to reach out to trusted adults if help is needed.

Without the ELH, child abuse might still be viewed as a "stand alone" issue, but the vibrant interaction of our members has allowed us to reach new audiences with our messaging about the importance of investing in children's welfare...early! We know that untreated/non-intervened child abuse and neglect can easily lead to multiple societal issues such as inappropriate behavior, lack of attention, higher drop-outs, substance abuse, unwanted pregnancies, potentially homelessness and even criminal behavior, possibly violent behavior. Further, the enormous impact on mental and chronic health conditions is well documented. My colleagues throughout the community now well recognize the tie these issues have to child abuse and neglect, which prior to the ELH did not necessarily occur. This grows in importance when we realize that less than 10% of abuse or neglect cases are ever reported, leaving scores of walking-wounded in our communities.

At a much higher level, so many children across Oregon are not receiving the broad swath of supports they need to grow and thrive, particularly those in rural and lower income situations. Every child needs positive, nurturing relationships with their parents and caregivers and access to high-quality health care, early care, and education. Young children who experience barriers to opportunity due to poverty, race/ethnicity, disability, language, or geographic location don't often have access to the proven programs and services that support healthy development when their growing brains need to be nurtured most. When they do, these children are more likely to live healthier lives with better educational and economic outcomes.

For this reason, on behalf of the 21 Child Abuse Intervention Centers in Oregon, along with our staffs and thousands of volunteers, as well as partner organizations, I am urging you to support the Early Childhood Coalition Legislative Agenda. Each of these programs provides a vital link in creating an effective safety net for our many communities' most vulnerable children and their caregivers.

Thank you for your time and attention to these issues. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have of me or the work of our agencies in serving children and families.

Sincerely,

Russell Mark
President/CEO

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