



earlylearninghub.org

August 6, 2020

To: Senate President Peter Courtney  
Speaker Tina Kotek  
Co-Chair Betsy Johnson  
Co-Chair Steiner-Hayward  
Co-Chair Dan Rayfield

From Jim Seymour, Community Leader and Board Chair Marion & Polk Early Learning Hub

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Thank you for your investment in the early learning system. In the 2019 legislative session, you demonstrated your commitment to the youngest children and their families in the creation of the early learning account – thank you. Research has consistently shown that the investment in early education—particularly among disadvantaged children—improves not only cognitive abilities, but also critical behavioral traits like sociability, motivation, and self-esteem. In these unprecedented times with COVID-19, continued support of children and families is critical to minimize the impact both now in the years to come.

As an early learning hub, we are uniquely positioned to work with community partners to align services and leverage resources to support children, particularly those furthest from opportunity. Some examples of this work include:

#### Engaging families in decision making and local policy making

- Parent Advisory Committee guides and provides critical input to all aspects of the Marion & Polk Early Learning Hub key initiatives
- Provide information on a variety of resources for families, including preschool, childcare, developmental milestones, parent education, and community programs for children ages 0-5
- Engage parents through surveys and focus groups to gain broad input on services and supports needed in the community

#### Connecting to families to resources to meet needs

- Provide resources to community partners to assist in meeting emergent needs of families
- Provide resources to support parent education designed to support families in building skills in effective parenting
- Provide support and coordination of parent support groups during these challenging times

#### Supporting children and families in the transition to kindergarten

- Provide coordination and resources to community organizations to provide developmentally appropriate opportunities to build kindergarten readiness skills
- Provide books and kindergarten readiness activities for families to utilize at home during COVID-19
- Provide training and access to social emotional curriculum and tools to support providers and families in working with children with challenging behaviors

#### Community collaborations and outreach

- Bring community partners – health, K12, early learning, social services - together to align, coordinate, and leverage resources to meet the needs of children and families
- Utilize data and information to ensure resources are serving those with the highest need

- Connect families to culturally specific programs designed to meet their needs
- Create opportunities for early learning providers to learn new ways to connect with families during the pandemic as well as provide a space for their own

#### Equity and diversity

- Work locally with community partners, culturally specific organizations, and families to build an early learning system to provide access to programs to mitigate disparities
- Fund culturally specific organizations to provide parent education and programs designed to support families
- Develop additional resources and capacity along with culturally specific organizations
- Provide professional development to increase provider capacity in creating an environment to celebrating different cultures and ethnicity

#### To continue this work in support of children and their families, we ask that you:

- Uphold developmental support for building early childhood systems including the Early Learning Hubs. This will allow us, and Hubs across the state to continue the system building work to ensure that children are more ready for Kindergarten, with specific focus on children and families furthest from opportunity.
- Honor the tri-chair's original proposal by protecting the 20 percent commitment to Early Childhood and keep the full \$170 million allocated in 2020 as a mechanism for accountability to the original intent of the SSA.

Sincerely,



Jim Seymour  
MPELH Board Chair