



March 29, 2021

Testimony from Oregon Community Foundation in support of the Governor's recommendations for funding for early learning and family support in the Oregon Department of Education budget.

Submitted by Mary Louise McClintock, OCF Senior Education Strategy and Policy Advisor

Co-Chair Frederick, Co-Chair McLain, Members of the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education:

Oregon Community Foundation (OCF) strongly supports the \$127 million in increased investment in early care and learning programs in Governor Brown's proposed 2021-2023 budget. Children 0-5 are our most diverse Oregonians, and there is no more important investment than strategies to ensure they and their families have equitable access to programs and support they need for healthy development. We support the entire package, but in particular, I am here to urge you to approve increased funding for programs that support parents in their role as their children's first and most important teachers.

Research increasingly shows that early relationships have a significant impact on child outcomes, and — especially important for us to consider in a time when many children have experienced trauma — that nurturing, loving parent-child relationships can buffer children from the toxic effects of stress. Evidence-based and culturally-responsive parenting programs help parents build those strong relationships that are so key to child development.

OCF is one of four foundations that have invested more than \$16 million since 2010 in a statewide network of parenting education hubs, the Oregon Parenting Education Collaborative (OPEC). Through programs offered by the parenting hubs and their partners, thousands of parents have participated in parenting education classes and workshops. In 2019 the Oregon Legislature included \$2 million for the current biennium through the Student Success Act to support parenting education for parents of young children, and those funds have been flowing to communities via the OPEC infrastructure. This is a powerful partnership, yet the combination of foundation and state dollars is still only reaching a fraction of the parents who could benefit.

We urge you to support increased funding that leverages private, local government and nonprofit funding, expertise and community partnerships that have already had life-changing impacts for many families of varied circumstances.

In addition to the funding for parenting education, OCF also strongly urges you to approve \$75,000 for Reach Out and Read. In reaching families during visits with pediatricians, Reach Out and Read is an incredibly cost-effective approach to supporting family bonding and school readiness.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony, and please consider me to be a resource as you consider this important part of the budget: mlmclintock@oregoncf.org, 503-860-5483.