

March 26, 2021

Dear Members of the Education Subcommittee:

I am writing in support of fully funding Early Learning Hubs in the 2021-2023 budget. For the Libraries in Clackamas County (LINCC), the Clackamas County Hub is essential to closing the gaps in early childhood services throughout the county.

The Early Learning Hub connects the multitude of organizations serving families with children ages birth to 5 in each county. That is no small feat. In Clackamas County, that list of organizations is long and varied – ranging from Healthy Start to The Children’s Center to Metropolitan Family Services to public libraries. For libraries, this central connection allows us to broaden our reach to support populations with barriers to traditional library services, such as language or transportation. Instead of limiting our services to the people who walk in our doors, we can partner with a variety of organizations to bring library services to the families who need us most.

A perfect example of this happened during the pandemic. When libraries closed their doors last spring, we had no way of getting books to families stuck at home. Within the first few months of the closure, the Early Learning Hub reached out looking for donations for care boxes that would go to families with young children served by various organizations in the county. The LINCC libraries donated over 500 giveaway books to that effort, including over 150 books in Spanish. We donated another 100 books to Healthy Families curbside diaper pickup service, another Hub partner. Both connections allowed us to reach underserved populations even though the libraries themselves were closed.

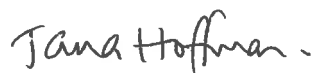
The same is true in non-COVID times. Annually, all the organizations in the Clackamas County Early Learning Hub come together to support families and offer information at the Get Prepped for Preschool Fair, the Family Resource Fair and the countywide Head Start Family Fun Day. This helps families by giving them a one-stop opportunity to find services they need, and helps us reach families we wouldn’t otherwise see.

The libraries also benefit from the amazing array of free parenting classes offered by Clackamas Parenting Together and the Hub. Thanks to that resource, we can connect all the parents who enter our doors with the support they need regardless of the parenting issues they face.

Clearly, there are plenty of great organizations serving young children in this state. Without the funding to coordinate our efforts, we are much less likely to reach the families who need us the most. The disparities within our communities have only widened this past year. It would be a mistake to cut funding of the Early Learning Hub when more families are struggling than ever before.

For all of these reasons, I urge you to fully fund the Early Learning Hub in the upcoming biennium.

Thank you for your consideration,



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