



LatinoNetwork

**Testimony of Anthony Castaneda, Policy Manager,
Regarding SB 5513
Ways and Means Education Subcommittee
March 29th, 2021**

Dear Co-Chairs Frederick and McLain and members of the Ways & Means Education Subcommittee,

Latino Network joins the Oregon Partners for Education Justice, Early Childhood Coalition, Children's Agenda, and the Equity Collaborative in support of SB 5133 to maintain current service levels for the Early Learning Division and add investments that are targeted to reduce educational disparities.

The global pandemic, coupled with wildfires and winter storms, revealed and exacerbated existing social, economic, and technological disparities disproportionately affecting historically marginalized communities in our education system. While some households adjusted to a work-from-home schedule, other families working in the hardest hit areas of the economy struggled to keep up with bills.

SB 5133 outlines targeted investments in the Equity Fund, Preschool Promise, Head Start Program, and other important programs and agencies, such as Early Learning Hubs located across the state. This investment will *add* over 6,000 preschool & Head Start slots, and increase grants to culturally specific organizations to serve 1,000 additional children without access to preschool to support kindergarten readiness. *All children are born full of potential* and these investments to expand access to high quality, culturally responsive education will break down barriers to opportunity at a time when we have the most diverse population of children in Oregon's history.

Community-based organizations bring valuable human, social, and financial resources to our education system. Non-profits, like Latino Network, play an integral role in the personal and academic lives of our youngest children and families. The Equity Fund makes this possible. Latino Network programs are designed to ensure that the Latinx community has access to programming that is responsive to our cultural and linguistic assets and skills. Latino Network's *Juntos Aprendemos* (Together We Learn) funded by equity investments, are proven to support *parents as a child's first teacher* and prepare children for success in kindergarten and beyond.

An expansion of Oregon's early learning system must be supported by a parallel coordinating infrastructure. The success of the programs will depend on access and coordination between community-based, local, and state partners.

As a community-based organization, we work closely with local and state partners, such as the Multnomah County Early Learning Hub. The hub system connects all the pieces of the systems that



LatinoNetwork

support families such as childcare, early learning, health care, and education. Early Learning Hubs are Oregon's solution to uplifting the cultural and linguistic strengths of families of color raising children.

And in Multnomah County that means centering the voices of Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color as we make sure every family has what they need to support their young children. Our Community Health Worker program and nationally recongized P-3 Coordinator program are supported by these investments. A cut to hubs means a cut to direct service providers, and in Multnomah that means a reduction to services designed and delivered by Black, Indigenous and other People of Color.

To overcome unacceptable racial disparities and promote an equitable recovery, Oregon's education budget for the 2021-23 biennium must prioritize investments in culturally responsive programs, services, curriculum, and supports that respond to the diverse strengths and needs of Oregon students.

We urge your support for SB 5513 and equity investments in early childhood education.

Thank you for the opportunity to share.

Sincerely,

Anthony Castaneda
Policy Manager
Latino Network