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Co-Chairs Frederick and McLain, members of the Education Subcommittee, my name is Steve Schenewerk, Pastor, Community Baptist Church; Regional Governance Chair of South Central Early Learning Hub; Chair of Douglas County SCOELH Leadership Team. I writing today to offer my support for fully funding Early Learning Hubs in the 2021-2023 budget.

Hubs are an Oregon designed solution to address the needs of families and children living in our state. Hubs such as ours are locally driven groups insuring that every family has access to the resources they need to assist them in raising children who are ready for Kindergarten and will be successful in their educational journey. Since Hubs are locally organized those partners provide easy access to local, regional, and state resources.

Hubs are an important piece of a early learning approach that requires stable funding. I am asking you and you to consider supporting the work of Hubs throughout the state by funding us at the CSL of \$22.4 million. The current budget reflects a \$1.4 million cut to Hubs due to COVID related reductions imposed during the pandemic.

Because Hubs are local they are nimble and able to react more quickly to immediate needs of families in each region. The SCOELH was able to provide resources for families to teach their preschoolers at home as child-care centers across the state closed due to COVID concerns. The SCOELH also was able to convene a task force to collaboratively develop a strategy to assist child-care centers to re-open and to provide resources so that new child-care opportunities could be made available.

The SCOELH has been trained to evaluate all our work through the lens of Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity standards. Because Hubs are locally governed – in many cases enlisting volunteers like myself – Hubs are able to identify children and families furthest from opportunity and to quickly provide resources to those families.

Cuts in funding will make it more difficult for Hubs like the SCOELH to impact families. The impact of the pandemic will take years to mitigate. Reduction in funding will slow the process unnecessarily.

I urge you to consider full Hub funding.

Thanks for your time and consideration

DR. STEVE SCHENEWERK
April 1, 2021

