

I'm writing in support of Governor Brown's budget especially in regard to increased funding for early learning and Oregon pre-kindergarten. My family has benefited greatly from our involvement with Early Head Start in Multnomah County and Head Start in Clackamas County. I had never heard of these programs nor what they had to offer until an advocate reached out to us after my son was born. We were assigned a home visitor who had a diaper allocation. Has anyone bought diapers lately? They're pricey. She was able to provide us a monthly allotment that helped us save a bit every month on our grocery bill. Even more impactful was when my son was diagnosed with a low level bi-lateral hearing impairment through a nurse-run health screening sponsored by Head Start. Not even his pediatrician was aware he had a problem. Due to early detection, we were able to find a specialist for further evaluation and formulate a plan with our pediatrician to monitor his hearing. Through Early Head Start and Head Start I also learned various tools and techniques to work on his motor skills, his cognitive abilities, and how to better deal with the frustration that comes with raising a little human. The socialization with other kids his age, pre-covid, was also a huge benefit in attending center-based Head Start. Affiliation with these organizations has made me a better parent. I've participated in parenting classes made available through the program which have helped me reduce my stress, approach problems with more love and understanding, and forge a better bond with my kids. I believe an increased budget for early learning and pre-k would make these programs available to more families which would benefit more big and little Oregonians.