

Dear Co-Chairs McLain and Frederick, and Members of the Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Education,

My name is Claire Catt. I am the Executive Director of United Way of Columbia County (also a St Helens mother of three children, ages 3, 6, 12.) United Way of Columbia County is proud to partner with our early learning hub to implement Preschool Outreach and Enrollment Strategies, helping connect families to preschool and child care opportunities.

I am writing to share my **support for HB 5013** and the investments in it for Oregon's youngest children and their families.

Specifically, I want to share my support for:


- Investments to maintain stable funding for our statewide **Early Learning Hub system**
- Investments in Oregon's early childhood **WORKFORCE, FACILITIES Infrastructure, and increasing ACCESS to quality programs** - especially access to culturally specific services funded by the \$10 million in the Early Childhood Equity Fund, programs that support strong families, and child care.

Last year, Oregon's Early Learning hubs connected over 5,000 families to a preschool slot, connected over 9,000 parents to parenting education services, connected nearly 6,000 families to home visiting services, and engaged over 270 parents in a role within the early learning hub. The early learning hubs therefore rely on a fully funded early childhood system to support their work of connecting families to services and ensuring they're provided in a coordinated fashion.

United Way of Columbia County is focusing on increasing Kindergarten Readiness through a variety of community-based interventions including Imagination Library, Preschool Navigators, Kindergarten Readiness calendars, and investments into non-profit partners that are meeting the essential needs of young families (food, shelter, emergency response, etc.). Families in Columbia County are struggling. By investing in robust, culturally appropriate, safe and affordable childcare options, you are investing in local economies, resilient families, and children who are prepared for Kindergarten and beyond.

This budget is truly an investment in Oregon's future. I urge your support for the critical investments in our statewide Early Learning Hub system, early childhood workforce, facilities Infrastructure, and increasing access to quality programs.

Thank you,

  
Claire Catt