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March 3, 2023

RE: HB 5013, Department of Early Learning and Care budget

Distinguished Legislators:

Latino Network is a 27 year old multi-service agency serving 11,000 participants across the Portland Metro region and ongoing partnership in Deschutes County. We have been providing culturally-specific early childhood education programming for 20 years and currently operate at 20 sites.

We are in the midst of a capital campaign to build a community center and preschool in the Rockwood neighborhood of Gresham, our first stick and brick preschool facility. We thank the Legislature for its past support of this important project and ask for its continued support in this session.

Latino Network strongly supports HB 5013 and in particular the \$10 million increase in the Early Learning Equity Fund.

Currently, 23% of kids under 5 statewide are Latinx and that number will continue to grow as our state becomes browner. Increased funding is needed for the following reasons:

- The state needs strong community partners to continue to provide and grow high quality programming and our costs too are rising;
- The state needs high quality bilingual, bicultural workforce and we must be competitive in wages and benefits;
- Most importantly, the community needs trusted partners who can deliver programming and also create needed systems change and increasing capacity is critical.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments and we urge the state to continue and expand its commitment to racial equity and justice in early learning.

Warm Regards,

Tony DeFalco

Executive Director