



Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor



Oregon Department of
**Early Learning
and Care**

700 Summer Street NE #350
Salem, Oregon 97301

DEL.C.Info@delc.oregon.gov

Oregon.gov/delc

February 17, 2025

Dear Chair Hartman, Vice-Chair Nguyen, Vice-Chair Scharf, and House Early Childhood and Human Services Committee Members,

Thank you for holding the public hearing on HB 2815 –1 to establish a Tribal Early Learning Plan and Fund. The Department of Early Learning and Care (DEL.C) is committed to honoring Tribal sovereignty and self-determination pursuant to ORS 182.162-168, ORS 307.181 and EO 96-30. Tribal Nations have the right to determine what early learning and child care looks like in their communities, and we appreciate the leadership of Governor Kotek for supporting the establishment of a Tribal Early Learning Plan and recommending \$4.75 million for a new Tribal Early Learning Fund.

The nine federally recognized Tribes within Oregon's borders have each received \$69,000 in the 2023-25 biennium to fund early learning and care in their communities. These funds have:

- Expanded Immersion Language PreK programs
- Purchased culturally relevant, age-appropriate resources for early learning classrooms
- Supported access to early learning and wraparound support programs
- Promoted early childhood literacy
- Increased wages and classroom supplies for early childhood programs
- Offered community outreach events for young children and their families
- Covered training costs for professional development for the early childhood workforce.

Background

In 2021, the Legislature passed HB 2055 establishing a Tribal Early Learning Hub and the Tribal Advisory Committee (TAC). The TAC was responsible for the design of the Tribal Hub, which was defined as an "entity [...] to coordinate early learning services provided to the tribal communities of this state." The TAC was formed in 2021 with two representatives appointed by each of the nine federally recognized Tribes.

As the Early Learning Division, now DEL.C, worked with the TAC to identify the needs, goals, and core functions of a Tribal Early Learning Hub, several key considerations were highlighted.

*The Mission of the Department of Early Learning and Care fosters coordinated, culturally appropriate, and family-centered services that recognize and respect the strengths and needs of all children, families, and early learning and care professionals. **Our Vision** is that all children, families, early care and education professionals, and communities are supported and empowered to thrive.*



Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor



1. By establishing an “entity” to serve as the Tribal Hub, a middle-man structure would be created that interrupts each of the Tribes’ government-to-government relationships with DELC.
2. The primary desire for a Tribal Hub was to increase Tribal access to funds which, prior to the creation of DELC, had required Tribes to compete alongside other applicants or partner with regional Early Learning Hubs to qualify for funds.
3. The State of Oregon lacks a statewide plan for Tribal early learning and care, similar to the American Indian/Alaska Native Student Success Plan for K-12.

The need for HB 2815

DELC has worked closely with the Tribal Advisory Committee and engaged in government-to-government consultation to introduce HB 2815 -1. The legislation addresses the infrastructure limitations of a Tribal Early Learning Hub and allows DELC to center Tribal sovereignty and self determination to support early learning in Tribal communities.

The bill:

- Establishes the Tribal Early Learning Plan and Fund in place of a Tribal Early Learning Hub
- Outlines Strategies & Objectives of the Tribal Early Learning Plan
- Creates the Oregon Tribal Early Learning Alliance (OTELA) advisory body in place of the Tribal Advisory Committee and outlines its structure
- Establishes the Fund and Grant Program for Tribes, including 5% DELC set-aside
 - Note: GRB included \$4.75M recommended investment (\$4.5M for Tribes)
- Defines DELC's Responsibilities (Tribal Consultation, Rulemaking, Administering the Fund, Developing and Implementing the Tribal Early Learning Plan)

We encourage your support of the -1 amendment to HB 2815 so that we can continue supporting the nine federally-recognized Tribes within Oregon’s borders and their access to high quality early learning and care.

Alyssa Chatterjee

Early Learning System Director, Department of Early Learning and Care
