

March 6, 2025

Co-Chairs Sollman & Ruiz, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Lisa Harnisch, and I serve as the Executive Director of the Marion & Polk Early Learning Hub and Co-President of the Oregon Early Learning Hub Association.

I am here today in strong support of **HB 5514**, DELC's budget bill. You've heard about the critical investments in Oregon's early childhood system—investments that are essential to ensuring our youngest children, especially those who are underserved and marginalized, have the foundation they need to thrive in school and beyond.

There are many important pieces of the budget and in the essence of time, today I want to highlight **Early learning hubs, Literacy, and suspension/expulsion prevention and Preschool Promise**—a few of the key components of this budget.

### The Role of Early Learning Hubs

Oregon's early learning hubs are funded through DELC, and it is imperative that the legislature funds hubs at the **current service level**, as proposed in the Governor's Budget. In my region, this funding allows us to:

- Strengthen cross-sector partnerships, particularly between health and early learning,
- Bring partners together to align and promote services, and
- Guide families to critical support services,

What this looks like to families is finding subsidized preschool, parent education, access to resources to meet needs. We also work with community partners focusing on workforce development, program alignment and integration of different sectors.

### Literacy Investments Matter

I want to call special attention to the **\$25 million literacy investment** included in the Governor's Recommended Budget, which allocates **\$10 million to continue the Birth through Five Literacy Fund**. This funding, available at the start of this fiscal year, has already made a tangible impact:

- In Marion & Polk counties, we hosted a **national expert on the science of reading** for three day-long workshops with **175 early childhood and kindergarten teachers** and two sessions for families providing **practical literacy strategies for parents**.
- We have provided funding to **community-based organizations, libraries, schools, childcare providers, and culturally specific groups** to expand materials and curriculum for families.

### OUR MISSION:

To convene, collaborate, and catalyze action in our hub region to better align services and resources for children and families.

Without this funding through the Hub system, many families would lack access to high-quality literacy resources, and professionals would not have the necessary support to guide children's literacy development.

### Additional Budget Priorities

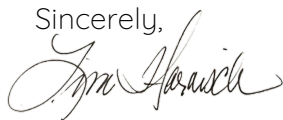
I also urge your support for:

- **\$2.2 million for the Imagination Library** – This program has been a game-changer for early literacy access. In just **2 ½ years**, we've delivered **115,713 books** to **9,182 children aged 0-5** in our region. Currently, **7,308 active children** are on track to receive **196,072 more books**—a crucial investment in their literacy journey.
- **\$4 million for suspension/expulsion prevention** – This funding is vital to ensuring the early childhood workforce has the skills, resources, and supportive environments needed to keep children in care and learning.
- **Maintaining current service level funding for Preschool Promise** – This program has been transformative, offering **subsidized preschool opportunities** to children who otherwise wouldn't have access. Preschool Promise also supports **small childcare businesses**, providing high-quality early learning in both **small centers and home-based settings**, giving families greater choice. In our region, we have 884 slots who benefit greatly from this critical program.
- **Employment Related Day Care or ERDC**. This program is critical for families able to be able to have access to high quality childcare.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I urge your support for this essential funding to ensure Oregon's youngest learners and their families have the resources they need to succeed.

I would be happy to answer any questions or provide more information.

Sincerely,



Lisa Harnisch  
Executive Director, Marion & Polk Early Learning Hub  
Co-President, Oregon Early Learning Hub Association.

### OUR MISSION:

To convene, collaborate, and catalyze action in our hub region to better align services and resources for children and families.

