

January 28, 2019

House Committee on Education

Public Testimony on HB 2025

Chair Doherty, Vice Chairs Alonso Leon and Helt,

As Early Learning Hub Directors, we are in support of HB 2025 as a vehicle to strengthen the Preschool Promise program and create a statewide scholarship program for early childhood educators.

Since the 2015 legislative session, Early Learning Hubs across the state have been working diligently to implement the Preschool Promise program. Through this ground-breaking legislation, more Oregon children experience a high-quality preschool experience, especially from families between 101-200% of the Federal Poverty Level who would not have otherwise been able to afford a quality pre-kindergarten program. The early care and education workforce has made significant gains in meeting educational and professional goals. Families have a wider choice of a high-quality programs in different locations, such as tribal programs, community-based organizations, family child care, and Head Start programs located in school districts or other locations.

Early Learning Hubs play a significant role with community partners to ensure that preschool programs meet the needs of eligible children and families. Hubs contract with entities to provide Preschool Promise and work to ensure continuity across programs, and do so based on the community and geographic needs of the regions. Hubs bring together Preschool Promise providers across the continuum of care, to ensure smoother transitions to kindergarten.

Professional development and shared learning opportunities are offered across programs to ensure all programs have access to information and best practices. In addition, Hubs have the capacity to offer a variety of supports to providers, which can include access to additional resources such as curriculum, social emotional supports, and mental health consultants. These capacity building supports and services have an impact on all children in the programs, not just those that are part of Preschool Promise.

Data collection and analysis is a key role of Hubs. Many Hubs are working to connect the preschool experience to kindergarten and through third grade to look at the effectiveness of a preschool experience. Additionally, Hubs are able to utilize aggregate data from standardized assessments from classroom observations to provide insight on professional development opportunities for either individual programs, or across many provider types.

Some Hub locations are able to facilitate shared services across providers to be able to provide supports such as transportation, facilities, and food services. These are creative partnerships that leverage partner funding and stretch state dollars further.

Coordination around enrollment with Preschool Promise, Head Start, and Oregon Pre-Kindergarten programs is an important role that Early Learning Hubs play. By having a coordinated approach to outreach and enrollment activities, the community is better served, and we maximize the resources of

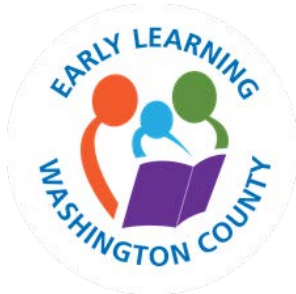
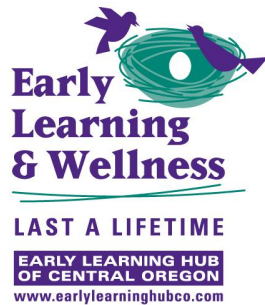
each participating programs. Reaching more families, especially those who do not qualify for Head Start or Oregon Pre-Kindergarten, ensures that more children in our state have access to early learning, and they will be more ready for kindergarten at the age of 5.

We support the pathways created in this bill for ECE teachers to access a BA and higher. Early Care and Education professionals historically either have lacked the opportunity or did not have the requirement to attain a Bachelor's or higher degree. Our higher education institutions play a key role in offering programs that are accessible to these professionals. A scholarship program will make these degrees affordable for these professionals and reduce the debt load that so many educators face upon graduation. Additionally, higher education institutions should offer additional opportunities in languages other than English, such as Spanish, to support our growing population of providers and children whose first language is not English.

Early Learning Hubs provide leadership, coordination, and alignment within the early learning system, inclusive of Preschool Promise, as well as other early learning initiatives in our respective regions. We enthusiastically support HB 2025 and look forward to supporting the continued success of early learning opportunities for children and families furthest from opportunity.

Sincerely,

Early Learning Hub Directors



FRONTIER EARLY LEARNING HUB
HARNEY & GRANT COUNTIES

