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Dear Legislators,

Lutheran Community Services in Klamath Falls would like to express our strong support for HB 2897 that establishes an Early Childhood Equity Fund. We know that children learn best when programs meet their cultural, educational, social and behavioral needs. Research also supports that the early learning years (0-6) are a key time to build success for later educational opportunities.

In 2014, Klamath County had the 3rd highest rate of child maltreatment and was found to be serving less than 10% of at risk children in prevention programs (Nygren, Green and Gordon, Strengthening Families, 2014). In response to "Strengthening Families: Advancing Knowledge to Prevent Child Abuse and Neglect"(Nygren, et al 2014) a report to the Children's Trust Fund, Klamath County established the Keeping Families Together initiative utilizing the Communities that Care model. Through the CTC model, Klamath County established a primary goal of developing a relief nursery to meet the needs of our most at risk children and families. Relief Nurseries provide family-centered and trauma informed services. These funds and our model are important for families that have experienced historical trauma through both direct and structural racism.

We are currently in the development phase of our relief nursery project "A Family Gathering Place". We know how important culturally specific services are and are working with the Klamath Tribes and the Latino community to assure our services meet the cultural needs of their communities.

Support from the State Legislature is essential to provide adequate, culturally appropriate services to our most at risk children and families. Many communities in Oregon do not have the resources to support high quality services without support from state legislature.

HB 2897 would ensure that communities can provide the culturally competent, high quality services our children and families need. Thank you for your work that supports our agencies, our communities and most importantly, our children and families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nora Foster", written in a cursive style.

Nora Foster
Associate District Director
Lutheran Community Services Northwest, Klamath County