



**EARLY LEARNING  
MULTNOMAH**

February 21, 2019

Dear Honorable Members of the Oregon Legislature,

We are writing in support of the Early Childhood Equity Fund HB 2897.

We direct the state's early learning hub in Multnomah county. Our task is to build an early learning system that is free from bias and gives every child what they need to learn and grow. We make sure that children and families get the supports and services that they need from people whom they trust. That's why we invest in community-based organizations who have developed culturally specific early learning programs designed by and for the community they serve.

In Multnomah county alone, young children from communities of color are 45% of the total population aged six and younger, yet they are 67% of the children in households at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level. Our established early childhood programs were thoughtfully designed years ago for the White children who were the largest group of low-income children in Multnomah. But now those programs are serving a population where only three out of every ten eligible children are White. It's time to invest in early learning opportunities that meet the cultural and linguistic needs of the children we have now.

Fortunately for Oregon, we have community-based organizations that have stepped up and developed their own culturally specific early learning and parent engagement programs. These programs are preparing children of color for success in kindergarten by teaching children to communicate, form relationships, and build their early reading and writing skills with an approach that is grounded in their home language and unique cultural experiences.

We respectfully request your support for HB 2897 so that children of color in Oregon have access to early learning opportunities that meet their cultural and linguistic needs.

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