

To: Chair Doherty and Members of the House Committee on Education

From: Peggy Samolinski, Director, Youth and Family Services Division

Date: March 1, 2019

RE: Support for House Bill 2897

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Chair Doherty and Members of the House Committee on Education,

I am writing in support of HB 2897, which establishes the Early Childhood Equity Fund and provides support for proven culturally specific early learning programs statewide.

The foundation for who we become as adults, and thus how our communities succeed, is constructed during early childhood. Yet, in Oregon, 3 out of 4 of children in low-income household lack access to the high-quality early learning programs that research shows predicts their success in school and later life. In addition, children of color and English Language Learners are both the state's fastest growing population of young children and face the greatest barriers to opportunity and disparities in educational outcomes. These figures are mirrored in Multnomah County, where we see that two-thirds of the children ages 0-6 living in poverty are from culturally specific communities. If we hope to see outcomes change, we must invest in early childhood supports for children and families that meet the needs of culturally specific communities.

There are many culturally specific programs in Oregon that have developed high-quality, innovative program models that are proven to produce positive outcomes for children of color, immigrants and refugees. We need to take advantage of these effective programs and community expertise to ensure the success of our youngest residents - and therefore, our future economic stability as a state.

The state does not currently invest in these proven programs, creating a significant gap in opportunity for our most vulnerable children. The Equity Fund is a step toward addressing this gap, using culturally specific strategies that build off of community strengths and meet family and child needs.

I support your effort to plan for the future of all Oregonians by addressing disparities in opportunity and education facing children of color and investing in young children.

Thank you for your work on HB 2897.

Peggy Samolinski

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