



*The League of Women Voters of Oregon is a 99-year-old grassroots nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. We envision informed Oregonians participating in a fully accessible, responsive, and transparent government to achieve the common good. LWVOR Legislative Action is based on advocacy positions formed through studies and member consensus. The League never supports or opposes any candidate or political party.*

March 6, 2019

To: Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education  
Co-Chair Senator Lew Frederick  
Co-Chair Representative Susan McLain

Re: **HB 5015** – Oregon Department of Education – Early Learning Division (ELD) – **Comment**

The League of Women Voters of Oregon believes that the early years of a child's life are crucial in building the foundation for educational attainment and greatly impact success or failure in later life.\*

Today you have heard testimony from many early-learning direct service providers, educators, child care providers, and others working daily with Oregon's youngest – those not able to testify in their own behalf but capably represented by these professionals.

This session you are looking at a bare-bones Ways and Means allocation anticipating that a recession is imminent. We wish to stress that an investment in the early years pays off throughout a lifetime. There are a series of program elements that have been built over the past few legislative sessions. **All these pieces fit together in an elegant jig-saw puzzle** to first serve children with the greatest risk factors and then build to ultimately assure that early-intervention prepares children for kindergarten and ultimately high school graduation. **Please keep all the pieces of this critical budget.**

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.

Norman Turrill  
LWVOR President

Chris Vogel  
Education Policy Coordinator

*\* In the Spring of 2015, League members throughout Oregon studied [Children at Risk and Early Learning](#) then discussed consensus questions posed by the LWVOR study committee, and submitted their views to the state League. Those views were combined to formulate the following position, which can now be used for advocacy by local Leagues as well as the LWVOR Action Team.*

*LWVOR Children at Risk Position Statement: The League of Women Voters of Oregon believes that the early years of a child's life are crucial in building the foundation for educational attainment and greatly impact success or failure in later life. Early intervention and prevention measures are effective in helping children reach their full potential. The League supports policies, programs, and funding at all levels of the community and government that promote the well-being, encourage the full development, and ensure the safety of all children. These include:*

- Nutrition and food access for vulnerable children and families
- Access to affordable, safe, and stable housing
- Early screening (physical, dental, mental, and behavioral) for all children; early prenatal care and ongoing health care for children (physical, mental, dental)
- Access to affordable, quality childcare (see LWVOR Child Care position)
- Access to early literacy and pre-school programs, including but not limited to Early Head Start and Head Start
- Programs for mental health and addictions treatment for parents
- Family support, including but not limited to home visiting, parenting classes, and family relief nurseries
- Comprehensive services for children with developmental and cognitive disabilities
- Use of evidence-based practices in child welfare and foster care
- Programs to reduce poverty by providing parents with assistance in job training and education Policies and legislation to reduce racial or ethnic minority status inequities



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March 6, 2019

To: Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education  
Co-Chair Senator Lew Frederick  
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Re: **HB 5015** – Oregon Department of Education – Youth Development Division (YDD) – **Comment**

The League published a study and position on Runaway and Homeless Youth in February 2007.\* We have followed state funding and services for at-risk youth over several decades.

Youth who do not finish high school have lower career earnings, reduced economic productivity, lower health outcomes, and overrepresentation in the justice system. Per earlier testimony, it is exponentially costlier for the State of Oregon once a youth enters the juvenile justice system. The YDD estimates that it invested \$600 per youth annually during the current biennium through Juvenile Crime Prevention funds. In contrast, the cost to detain a youth in OYA closed custody is estimated to be \$146,000 per year. Given those numbers, the relatively tiny 2019-21 current service level (CSL) proposal for \$24.4 million total funds, seems to perpetuate the long-term underfunding for programs that make a significant difference for at-risk youth. Ultimately the state of Oregon can pay now to support these youth or pay later.

Youth & Community Grants are funded from a combination of Federal Title XX Youth Investment funds received from the Department of Human Services, and a General Fund appropriation received during the 2017 legislature. The Title XX funds will be **reduced by \$450,000** during the 2019-21 biennium. While the \$450,000 might be “decimal dust” in other parts of the Department of Education Budget, it is a significant dollar amount for this small division. The League would support adding back this funding from other available sources to serve more youth. If there is the willpower in the Capitol and among voters to raise more revenue, the Youth Development Division would benefit from a greater investment.

**Services for at-risk youth now exist in three state agencies.** We appreciate the efforts for **coordination** so that youth are not siloed and departments work together to deliver services. We believe that even more could be done to facilitate an “any-door” approach so that these disenfranchised youth are linked to a full suite of services at the earliest possible time. Many of these youth have had adverse childhood experiences, they have disengaged from traditional education, they are frequently homeless or lack strong family supports.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation

  
Norman Turrill                      Karen Nibler                      Christine M. Vogel  
LWVOR President                      Social Policy Coordinator                      Education Policy Coordinator

*\* Juvenile Delinquency Prevention Programs and youth outreach programs reside in **Department of Education Youth Development Division**. Runaway and Homeless Youth program are anticipated to move from Child Welfare to Self Sufficiency within the **Department of Human Services (DHS)**. The **Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS)** agency is the recipient of federal and state funds for emergency housing for adults, families and unaccompanied youth. The numbers of unaccompanied youth are increasing as school districts report the number of students who say that they are homeless with or without the family.*