

Co-Chairs Frederick and McLain, members of the Education Subcommittee,

My name is Lindsay McElroy, I am a member of the Parent Advisory Committee for the Marion & Polk Early Learning Hub. I am here today to offer my support for fully funding Early Learning Hubs in the 2021-2023 budget.

Early Learning Hubs are Oregon's solution to addressing the complex needs of families raising children from pre-birth through age five. Hubs are local conveners with the goal of ensuring there is no wrong door for families attempting to access the myriad of programming and services that support young children and their families. Hubs also interface with the organizations delivering programming to ensure that when there is a gap in services, it is identified and filled.

We've found great advantages to the hub system, which moves outside of agency silos and connects the work of Oregon Health Authority, Oregon DHS, Early Learning Division, the broader ODE, private funders, and community-based organizations, like The Early Learning Hub of Marion and Polk Counties. The hub role is meant to be nimble to adjust to the needs of their local community, which is why you hear a variety of different examples of the work hubs do. At their core, hubs ensure providers of early learning services are accountable for outcomes and that services are provided in a cost-efficient manner.

For me and my family, these programs have allowed me to attend ongoing parent education courses, kindergarten readiness courses, and funding so that my child could attend preschool, through the preschool promise program. These programs have been so appreciated and so beneficial for my family, as well as for many others in the surrounding communities.

The current budget contains a \$1.4 million cut which was levied on hubs during a COVID-related special session in an effort to balance the budget. We are just beginning to understand the impact of the pandemic on families with young children. Families are struggling to care for their children while maintaining employment, and those who faced economic insecurity prior to the pandemic have taken the brunt of the impact of the last year. Families need coordinated services now more than ever before. BIPOC families have been disproportionately impacted by the virus, women have disproportionate borne the burden of childcare throughout the shutdown, and we have a real risk of undoing the progress we've made.

With enhanced investment from the federal government and a healthy revenue forecast, we have a responsibility to fully fund the local coordination that ensures families have somewhere to turn when they need help. A cut to hubs means a cut to support for young children and their families. We urge your support for full hub funding. Thank you for the opportunity to share our concerns.

Sincerely,

Lindsay McElroy