

COMMUNITY BAPTIST CHURCH
91 SE THOMPSON
PO BOX 2076
WINSTON, OR 97496
541-679-9569
PASTOR: Dr. Steven William Schenewerk
www.winstoncommunitybaptist.com

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To the Honorable Co-Chairs Johnson, Steiner Hayward and Rayfield, members of the Ways and Means Committee:

My name is Steven William Schenewerk. I am writing today to support fully funding our early learning system, specifically restoring the cut to Early Learning Hubs in the 2021-2023 budget.

Early Learning Hubs have been tasked with ensuring there is no wrong door for families attempting to access services that support children 0-5, and their families. The work of hubs is one piece of a larger early childhood system, which is why I am writing today supporting not only hubs, but the Early Childhood Coalition agenda. Supporting families is critical to creating the kind of Oregon we all want to experience.

Hubs were built to be nimble in adjusting to meet the needs of the community. While our budget is under ODE, we work with local foundations, businesses, faith communities, and parents to connect the services of Oregon Health Authority, Oregon DHS, Early Learning Division, to ensure gaps in our system are filled. This has been especially critical during COVID-19. The South Central Oregon Early Learning Hub is working on an effective way to connect local child care providers, businesses, faith communities, and parents during this challenging year. Many child care centers were closed early in the pandemic, creating hardship for parents and guardians who were working outside their homes. Because the South Central Oregon Early Learning Hub had existing relationships with local foundations, businesses, faith communities and other partners Douglas County has been able to assist child care centers with cleaning supplies and technical assistance as centers are slowly re-opening.

The governor's recommended budget carries over a \$1.4 million cut which was levied on hubs during a COVID-related special session in an effort to balance the budget. This cut to direct services could mean that our services to support child care centers, home visiting programs (currently being done via Zoom and other on-line platforms), will be impacted.

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.

Our ask is to fund hubs at current service level: \$22.4m to ensure our hub is able to fully fund our service providers.

THANK YOU

Dr. Steven William Schenewerk
Chair, Regional Governance Hub, South Central Early Learning Hub;
Chair, Douglas County Governance Team
541-784-8901