

# MALHEUR EDUCATION SERVICE DISTRICT REGION 14

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**Mark Redmond**  
Superintendent

**Angie Arriola**  
Director of Curriculum

**Teresa Jones**  
Director of Special Education



**Malheur**  
EDUCATION SERVICE DISTRICT

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**Kelly Poe**  
Director of Early Learning

**Nickie Shira**  
STEM and Innovation Coordinator

**Jerry Peacock**  
CTE Regional Coordinator

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To: Joint Committee on Ways and Means  
From: Eastern Oregon Early Learning Hub  
RE: Support for funding Early Learning Hubs at Current Service Level

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

My name is Kelly Poe, director of the Eastern Oregon Early Learning Hub serving Baker, Malheur and Wallowa counties. I am here today to support fully funding our early learning system, specifically restoring the cut to Early Learning Hubs in the 2021-2023 budget. As a Hub Director, we are charged with ensuring there is no wrong door for families attempting to access services that support children 0-5, and their families. The need for this work has never been more evident than throughout the last year.

The work of hubs is one piece of a larger early childhood system, which is why we are here today supporting not only hubs, but the Early Childhood Coalition agenda. This agenda is a recipe of sustained funding and investments to support Oregon's young children and families. Hubs were built to be nimble in adjusting to meet the needs of the community. We work outside agency silos to connect the services of Oregon Health Authority, Oregon DHS, Early Learning Division, private funders, and community-based organizations to ensure gaps in our system are filled.

This has been especially critical during COVID-19. The Eastern Oregon Early Learning Hub leveraged and coordinated resources with organizations such as the Oregon Community Foundation, Building Healthy Families, Baker Early Learning Center, four head start programs in the region, EI/ECSE services, and the Welcome Center for Refugees. Projects and services included funding early last spring to in-home child care programs who were committed to staying open for emergency care, early learning packets to families with preschool age children, and safe spaces were created in each county where families with young children could safely meet with professionals when needed. We are expanding Healthy Families Oregon services to include Baker and Malheur counties through a partnership with IRCO and the Welcome Center for Refugees. Without the Early Learning Hub, this work would not have happened.

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 would not only reduce our hub's ability to coordinate services and support families, it would also mean a cut to the direct service providers with whom we contract. Cuts to direct services will impact our service contracts with the Treasure Valley Children's Relief Nursery, the emerging Relief Nursery in Baker, and Building Healthy Families in Wallowa county for support services for our high risk families. It would also limit our ability to leverage resources for Reach Out and Read and the Dolly Parton Imagination Library which provide age appropriate books to families on a regular basis.

As we are grasping the impact of the pandemic on vulnerable families with young children, the timing of this cut is especially concerning. 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 risk undoing any progress we've made. With enhanced investment from the federal government and a healthy revenue forecast, we have a responsibility to fully fund these services and the coordination that makes them successful. Our ask is to **fund hubs at current service level: \$22.4m will ensure our hub is able to fully fund services and coordination**. We urge your support for full funding of our early childhood system, including hub funding. Thank you for the opportunity to share our concerns.

Respectfully,  
Kelly Poe  
Director, Eastern Oregon Early Learning Hub