



March 29, 2023

Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE
Salem OR 97301

Chair Neron, Vice-Chairs Hudson and Wright, Members of the Committee,

My name is Jim Seymour. I work for Mountain West Investment Corporation headquartered here in Salem, Oregon. I am the Project Director for the Salem-Keizer Community Business and Education Leader's Collaborative.

I am writing in support of HB 3198 and the forthcoming amendments expanding literacy supports to our youngest learners.

HB 3198 proposes expanded investments in literacy supports for families with children age 0-5. It proposes doing this in alignment with two current programs: Kindergarten Partnerships and Innovation (KPI) and the Equity Fund.

Science is clear that from ages zero to five, the brain is growing and developing at its fastest rate. By using evidence and researched approaches from the earliest ages, we can make a difference. In our community, we have very strong partnership with the Marion & Polk Early Learning Hub and work collaboratively to support children and families in being ready for school. Together we have provided many Ready for Kindergarten sessions with families. At the core of this program is early literacy offering parents tools on how to engage with their child. In addition, we work to put as many books into the hands of children and their families through Little Free Libraries and at community events to encourage the love and joy of reading.

We can and we want to do more. We want more literacy opportunities in our community and the ability to reach more families. We want to make available more culturally specific and relevant programs and opportunities and do so in a way where families will see and understand the value of building early literacy skills. The proposed enhanced funding would expand our opportunities to support parents and community-based organizations as they construct the building blocks for literacy.

We are grateful this legislation addresses literacy comprehensively. Our work from birth through age 5 is only successful if we are able to send children to schools that are ready to support literacy through comprehensive data-informed strategies.

We will continue to collaborate with Marion & Polk Early Learning Hub role to support the allocation of KPI funds and to support community-based organizations in accessing and leveraging equity fund dollars to do culturally-specific early learning work from the earliest ages.

Thank you and I urge your support of HB 3198 and the forthcoming amendments.

Sincerely,
Jim Seymour