

Dr. Steven W. Schenewerk
PO Box 1321
Winston, OR 97496
541-784-8901
sschenewerk@gmail.com
April 21, 2023

Co-Chairs Steiner and Sanchez, Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you this evening. I am Steve Schenewerk, pastor of Community Baptist Church in Winston OR since 1991. I am here tonight representing the South-Central Oregon Early Learning Hub, of which I serve as volunteer chair of the regional governance council. The SCOELH serves Douglas, Klamath, and Lake Counties.

Like the other 15 Hubs, we exist to create and collaborate with our K-12 partners, families, Community Colleges, Native American Tribes, Community Care Organizations, Oregon Department of Human Services partners, Oregon Health Authority partners, faith communities, businesses, and local foundations such as the Ford Family Foundation and the Oregon Community Foundation. By coordinating with these partners, the Hub serves priority populations and works to ensure that all infants, toddlers, preschoolers and their families have the best options to provide for their children.

To provide services to the most valuable and often the most vulnerable population in this area – children from 0 – 5 years of age; I ask you to support:

Maintaining stable funding for the Statewide Early Learning Hub System, including the Tribal Learning Hub at \$23.6 million.

Establishing the Early Learning and Care Facilities Fund at \$110 million.

Expanding the Early Childhood Equity Fund with a \$10 million investment.

Investing in early literacy supports such as Kindergarten Partnership and Innovation (HB 3198).

Studying the barriers to hiring and retaining early childhood workforce as part of HB 2991.

As a pastor in a rural community, I see firsthand the results of such investments. I see families where both parents can work because they can access quality preschool care, I see young people in our school system having a stable foundation of evidence-based reading programs focused on phonics, and I see a community where job opportunities are increasing for adequately prepared High school students.

I see these results because past legislative sessions have chosen to invest upstream in early childhood education which saves families and the state untold dollars in the long run. Difficult choices will have to be made, but investing in our most valuable and vulnerable population should be an on-going priority.