

## **Testimony in support of Parenting Education (3/6/2025)**

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Good afternoon co-chairs Ruiz and Sollman and members of the committee. I'm Dr. Shauna Tominey (she/her). Parenting is hard. I *know* that - as the parent of a teen, a former early childhood teacher and parenting educator. As parents, we don't need people telling us what to do - we need **support** to navigate parenting challenges and stress, build our toolbox of parenting strategies, and celebrate parenting wins. What we **need** are access to parenting programs that connect families with each other and community resources rather than fuel stigma and divide.

It was for these reasons that Oregon's four largest philanthropic foundations partnered with Oregon State University to build a state system for families grounded in research and data called the Oregon Parenting Education Collaborative, which I'll call OPEC.

In my current role, I'm an associate professor at Oregon State University and state coordinator for OPEC. Since 2010, OPEC has served over a million families. In 2019, Oregon's Department of Human Services wanted to expand prevention programs for families. Instead of building their own system, they invested in OPEC-leveraging the OPEC Hub network, staff time, professional development, and data collection already in place so that their funds could go further and support more families. In 2020, the Early Learning Division (now DELC) did the same. DELC funds allow OPEC to reach an additional 25,000 families every biennium.

Oregon Health Authority joined this year as a third OPEC state partner because the DELC funds qualify to serve as a state match to draw down Children's Health Improvement Plan dollars, expanding OPEC's reach to serve more than twice as many families, making DELC funds absolutely critical in this initiative. Investing in early childhood has an estimated 13% financial return on investment, but the investment in strong families and communities is absolutely priceless. The programs you are hearing about today-OPEC and each of the others-are needed now more than ever for Oregon to be a place where families can live and thrive.

Thank you for raising up Oregon's children and families and thank you for your service.

Learn more about OPEC here: <https://health.oregonstate.edu/opec>  
OPEC evaluation: <https://health.oregonstate.edu/opec/research/evaluation>  
OPEC Hubs: <https://health.oregonstate.edu/opec/hubs/directory>

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