

September 12, 2011

Chair Jeff Cogen
Multnomah County Commissioners
501 SE Hawthorne
Portland, Oregon 97214

Dear Jeff:

I am writing to you today in my role as Chair of the Early Childhood Council and a member of the Commission and an advocate for early childhood issues. The budget reductions from the state Commission on Children and Families requires the County to potentially eliminate up to 2.0 FTE from the local Commission budget and stems from very real economic realities. In terms of the Early Childhood Council, there are, I believe, compelling reasons why maintaining the Early Childhood Council coordinator position is in the best interests of the County.

As you know, the whole field of early childhood is rapidly becoming a priority issue for policy makers, governments, school districts, funders, philanthropy, universities and the business community. The Governor's Early Learning Council signals a significant step toward expansion of the public's focus on early learning issues and the importance of preparing our young people to enter school ready to learn. Additionally, the local effort regarding the Cradle to Career closely mirror the efforts of the Governor and has set into motion an incredible amount of positive movement towards making our youngest citizens a priority and, in turn, marks a significant contribution towards the investment in our education system, including pre-school education.

The Early Childhood Council has been a strong force in support of these efforts and was instrumental in securing \$3.2 million in federal funding for a Project Launch grant which is working towards strengthening services in the early childhood physical and behavioral health systems.

The Early Childhood Council is applying, through the Commission, to be a convener for early childhood with Cradle to Career and is well positioned to be part of a regional hub to oversee funds coming from the Governor's Early Learning Council.

Maintaining the strength and vitality of the Early Childhood Council is needed. There are strong funding opportunities for the County in the near future and the leadership role of the Early Childhood Council can greatly assist the County to be well positioned for these emerging opportunities both with the Early Learning Council and Cradle to Career and others.

The current coordinator has proven to be exceptionally well suited for this work and she demonstrates the strength, intelligence, common sense and organizational skills needed for this position.

Josh Todd can provide pathways for potential funding resources and options during his presentation for the Board to consider.

On behalf of the Early Childhood Council, I strongly encourage you and the Board to continue funding for this critical position.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation and assistance. If I can be of any help, please let me know.

Sincerely,

Rob Abrams

Rob Abrams, MSW
Chair, Early Childhood Council

CC: Board of County Commissioners
Early Childhood Council
Josh Todd