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May 6, 1997

Senator Tom Hartung, Chair  
Senate Education Committee  
State Capitol, S-212  
Salem, OR 97310


Dear Senator Hartung,

We would like to offer several comments regarding HB 3060 related to the State Commission on Children and Families which we understand is scheduled for a hearing before the Senate Education Committee.

First, HB 3060 addresses the role of the Commission on Children and Families in coordination activities for early childhood education programs such as Head Start and Early Childhood Special Education. It is our understanding that this coordination function is already an authorized role of the Commission under existing state statute. As a result we question the necessity of HB 3060.

Second, we are concerned that HB 3060 will serve as the context for efforts to alter or modify the state/local delivery system for early childhood development programs. As you are aware, we operate the Head Start program in Washington County, serving 346 children in ten centers. We believe that the current system, which involves the state contracting directly with community based organizations and local public agencies, is an efficient and cost effective delivery model. We believe that efforts to alter that system, to include local commissions, would add a layer of bureaucracy and dilute the authority and effectiveness of our local parent policy council.

Finally, we are extremely sensitive to any potential institutional changes that might have the effect of lowering or diluting the quality of our Head Start program. The federal Head Start Performance Standards, which have been adopted by the State of Oregon and overseen by the Department of Education, represent the state of the art in early childhood development guidance. These

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Performance Standards have been developed over a 30 year period based on research and field testing. They are the key to the high quality of the Head Start program.

It appears to us that there are significant questions about both the substance and intent of HB 3060. Therefore we suggest that no further action be taken on this bill until all the issues surrounding it are fully explored.

I appreciate your support Senator Hartung. Thank you for your kind attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jerralynn Ness".

Jerralynn Ness  
Executive Director