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MEDIA RELEASE, supplemental, overview of Study

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STUDY OVERVIEW: CHILDREN AT RISK, EARLY LEARNING, EARLY INTERVENTION, RELEASED March 2015

This Study released March 1, 2015 by the League of Women Voters of Oregon Education Fund examines: “What’s Best for Oregon’s children?” “[Children at Risk—early learning, early intervention](#)” provides background on Oregon’s efforts to improve its system for young children while reducing risk factors in children’s early years—from pregnancy to age six.

“At-risk child” is defined in a 2012 Oregon statute as a child who is at risk of not entering school ready to learn due to many factors including: Poverty, unsafe housing, inadequate nutrition, poor healthcare, violence or neglect, and parents who experience mental illness, substance abuse, incarceration or other issues diminishing nurturing parenting. Evidence-based studies show support that all young children, not only children with special needs or those in foster care may need more human services, healthcare or education.

Recognizing that 90% of brain development occurs in the first three years of life, a concerted effort to facilitate early intervention was highlighted in Oregon’s first Children’s Budget in 2012. Substantial legislative, funding and agency restructuring since 2010 have changed how Oregon reaches at-risk children.

In recent years the **Early Learning Council** has been charged with an intense focus to coordinate statewide efforts to help children thrive. Breaking down the frustrating barriers between agencies has helped families to enter by “any door” to receive assessments, early intervention and early learning support. Under the direction of the **Oregon Education Investment Board** the Oregon’s **Early Learning Division** within the Department of Education works with the **Oregon Health Authority** and the **Department of Human Services** and also facilitates a network of **sixteen regional HUBS** that connect families with preventative health care through **Coordinated Care Organizations** and with quality child care and nutrition services from the Department of Human Services. Children most at risk are connected with **Early Head Start, Head Start** and other quality pre-school programs to enhance social, emotional and intellectual learning. In the 2015-2016 school year, all **School Districts** will move to full day kindergarten to further reach goals of reading by third grade as a foundation for greater graduation rates in high school. The HUBs and School Districts are utilizing an “age three to grade three” initiative to further coordinate services for Oregon’s most at-risk children.

The League of Women Voters of Oregon Education Fund Study documents Oregon's structural changes, explores why the early years are critical for development and show the best return on invested dollars for a lifetime. The Study also lays out next steps for local communities and advocates for children to follow assuring that funding flows to services. With statutory restrictions on administration costs, incentives for agencies to focus on families and children through early intervention that prevents greater expenses later in life, Oregon has developed and implemented a plan that assertively focuses on "What is Best for Oregon's Children?" The regional HUBs are in their infancy, less than 18 months old, and coordination across historical fiefdoms or silos is a reset and mind-changing effort. We shall continue to follow the rollout of changes for Children at Risk: early learning, early intervention and encourages community stakeholders to become involved at a local level, advocating for children.

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