



# Early Childhood Matters

## **Make It Personal**

### *A Guide to Telling Your Story to Lawmakers*

Thank you for joining us for the Early Childhood Lobby Day! This guide will help you draft a personal story explaining to lawmakers why you support investments in early childhood. It's important for lawmakers to hear personal stories from constituents about the impact of early childhood programs and services. The examples below will give you an idea of what your story should include. The prompts on the back of this page will guide you through writing your own story.

#### **Example 1**

My name is Susan Smith. I am a parent of two young children and live in Baker City. After my second baby was born, I had three home visits from a nurse. She helped me with feeding and the baby's sleep routine and gave me information about play groups in my area that I could go to with both my kids. I wish I'd had home visiting when my first child was born. These services should be available to any parent of an infant who wants them. I hope you vote to invest in these and other services for young kids so that parents and kids in Oregon get the support they need.

#### **Example 2**

My name is Heather Sanchez. I live in Astoria and have a 4-year-old. My daughter loves her Head Start program and it has helped her to learn and connect with other kids. It also gives me information on how to be a better parent through volunteering and being in the classroom. Without Head Start, my family wouldn't have been able to afford preschool. I'm so glad we found a spot in a class because I can see what a difference it makes. Please invest state money to make sure more kids can attend preschool and access other programs and services.

#### **Example 3**

My name is Suleiman Ahmed. I live in Portland and have been working in early childhood for 15 years teaching in preschool settings and recently managing a preschool classroom. I am still unable to adequately support my family and earn a wage that reflects the skills I have working with children. Early educators are severely underpaid, something that drives many skilled educators out of the profession and ultimately hurts young kids. The early years are important. If we want kids to succeed, we need to make sure they have access to high-quality care and education, provided by well-paid professionals.

## Write Your Own Story

1. **Introduce yourself.** Give your name, city/town where you live, and your connection to early childhood (eg. parent, educator, advocate).

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2. **Identify your personal connection to our early childhood priorities.** Circle any of the programs, services, or legislative priorities below that you have experience with. Your experience might be a program or service you've either provided or used, or one you wanted to access but couldn't. From the choices you've circled, choose one that you feel most strongly about to discuss. See our legislative agenda for more information about these programs.

Head Start/Oregon Pre-K

Preschool Promise

Programs specific to your culture

Child Care

Parenting Education

Relief Nursery Services

Home Visiting

Professional development for  
child care providers and educators

Early Childhood Special Education/Early  
Intervention

Wage parity for child care  
providers and educators

3. **Write 2–3 sentences describing your experience with the program or service that you chose.** For example, you might describe your struggle finding licensed child care for an infant or toddler, or how Head Start or Home Visiting helped your family. Be as specific as you can about your experience.

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4. **Ask your legislator to support early childhood investments.** Keep in mind that we're advocating for a range of early childhood programs and services. We want all of them to be funded so they can work effectively together. Write 1–2 sentences that emphasize the importance of funding programs and services that support young kids and families. See our talking points for ideas on how to talk about the importance of early childhood.

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*You're ready to go! Feel free to refer to these notes in your conversations with legislators. You may want to practice telling your story in advance, though there's no need to memorize it exactly.*