



American Indian Health Commission for Washington State

"Improving Indian Health through Tribal-State Collaboration"

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March 14, 2013

The Honorable Ruth Kagi, Chair
Early Learning & Human Services
259A John L. O'Brien
P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

Re: HB1723 relating to expanding and streamlining early learning services and programs

Dear Representative Kagi:

On behalf of Washington's 29 federally recognized Tribes and two Urban Indian Health programs, the American Indian Health Commission of Washington State (AIHC) submits the following comments related to HB1723.

The AIHC is a tribally-driven non-profit organization with a mission of improving health outcomes for American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/AN) through a health policy focus at the state level. The AIHC has been in existence since 1995 and works to identify, prioritize, voice and act on Indian health issues and policies common to all.

In 2010, the AIHC approved the *Healthy communities: A Tribal Maternal-Infant Health Strategic Plan*. In that plan, home visiting was identified as a key strategy to reduce risk factors to infant mortality, poor pregnancy outcomes, and the overall health of American Indian and Alaska Native mothers, infants and families.

The AIHC supports of HB1723, however, requests an amendment to the bill to address two issues:

- 1) Add a member of a federally recognized tribe to the legislative task force on early learning, and
- 2) Add provisions to allow for funding of promising practices in home visiting program to ensure cultural relevance for Tribes and Urban Indian Communities. Evidence-based models have not demonstrated efficacy in Tribal or Urban Indian Communities.

The AIHC is working jointly with the Department of Early Learning (DEL) to identify needs, activities, barriers and gaps in Tribal and Urban Indian home visiting services. It is



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important that home visiting funds support promising practices that are effective in Tribes and Urban Indian communities and meet the needs of American Indians and Alaska Natives. This issue is rising to the top as we gather information from Tribes and Urban Indian Communities and is a recommendation that we make to DEL as part of a report due later this year.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Marilyn Scott, Chairwoman
American Indian Health Commission

Cc:

Early Learning and Human Services Committee
Jeromy Sullivan, Chair, Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe
Leonard Forsman, Chair, Suquamish Tribe
AIHC Delegates
Brent Simcosky, AIHC Interim Executive Director
Joe Finkbonner, NPAIHB Executive Director
Bette Hyde, Director, Department of Early Learning
Lonnie Johns-Brown, AIHC Lobbyist