NEWS FROM OREGON'S SENATOR
JEFF MERKLEY

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Senator Jeff Merkley Announces New Public–Private Partnership to Improve School Readiness

$2 Million in Federal funding will prepare Lane County Children Entering Kindergarten for Academic Success

SPRINGFIELD, ORE. – Today, Senator Jeff Merkley announced a $2 million public-private partnership that will support youth development and school readiness for Lane County children entering kindergarten. United Way of Lane County (UWLC) has been awarded a five-year Social Innovation Fund (SIF) grant from the Corporation for National and Community Service, the federal agency for volunteering and service programs.

UWLC will receive $2 million over the first two years, and will leverage the grant to implement the evidence-based Kids in Transition to Schools (KITS) Program developed by Oregon Social Learning Center (OSLC). The program's goal is to ensure children entering kindergarten are prepared for kindergarten both socially and academically. UWLC will identify high-performing organizations with the ability to implement the KITS Program and award four to six sub-awards in amounts ranging from $100,000 to $300,000 through an open, competitive process. The federal funding will leverage a minimum of $3.6 million in additional non-federal matching commitments from United Way and its subgrantees.

"One of the best investments we can make in America's future is providing high quality, accessible early childhood education. It's good for our children now, it's beneficial for their future success, and it's good for our future economy," **said Senator Merkley**. "This funding will make a real difference in the lives of Lane County children and their families."

"We are thrilled to award the United Way of Lane County this Social Innovation Fund grant that will ensure Lane County children are prepared and equipped with the skills needed for success as they enter school," **said Wendy Spencer, CEO of the Corporation for National and Community Service.** "I am proud that CNCS is supporting this project, which will take an inventive approach to one of today's most pressing issues – school readiness. I extend my congratulations and gratitude to the private sector partners who have joined them in making a commitment to help more children have bright and prosperous futures."

"The Social Innovation Fund gives us the opportunity to sustainably scale the Kids in Transition to School Program, which is a critical component to ensuring that young children and families in our community get the best start possible and are set on a path of success, " **says Noreen Dunnells, Executive Director**

and CEO of United Way of Lane County. “By investing in the education of our youth and the support of local families, this award will help us to strengthen the future of Lane County. Scaling a proven program, such as KITS, ensures that we are creating opportunities for a better life for all."

The SIF fosters public and private collaborations to evaluate and grow innovative community-based solutions that work. In just five years, the SIF and its private-sector partners have invested more than half a billion dollars in compelling community solutions. As a result of $229 million in federal grants and more than $516 million in non-federal match commitments, the SIF has made grants to 35 grantmaking institutions and 189 nonprofits working in 37 states and the District of Columbia.

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The Corporation for National and Community Service is a federal agency that engages more than five million Americans in service through its AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, Social Innovation Fund, and Volunteer Generation Fund programs, and leads the President's national call to service initiative, United We Serve. Since 1994, more than 830,000 Americans have provided more than 1 billion hours of service to their communities and country through AmeriCorps. For more information, visit NationalService.gov.

United Way of Lane County works to create opportunities for a better life for all. The organization’s work includes several key initiatives around early education, financial stability, and improvement of community health. This work is moved forward with the help of funded agencies, and numerous committed community partners, donors, and volunteers.

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