[External Sender] -Oregon Senate Speech Outline

Ben Schumacher <benschu13@icloud.com>

Sun 12/9/2018 9:53 PM

To:Lisa McConachie <lmcconac@pps.net>;

Oregon Senate Speech Outline

12-05-2018

Hello, my name is Ben Schumacher and I am a student with Columbia Regional Program. I have lived my entire life totally blind except for light perception. I have been served by Columbia Regional since I was an infant and today, I am a Senior at Gresham High School.

My first exposure to Columbia Regional Services was meeting David Cahill, my Orientation and Mobility Specialist. I was two years old and he gave me my first cane. David began to teach me the basics of the white cane travel. When I was in Preschool, David taught me how to move around the building and playground. My Braille teacher introduced me to a Perkins Brailler and taught me how to track lines of Braille.

By Kindergarten, David taught me how to find certain places and objects using a cane, and also navigating stairs. My first Braille teacher, Scott Wall, began to teach me the braille alphabet and the braille contractions for short form words. By the time I was in Third Grade, I had exposure to other braille teachers. Each teacher had their own method of teaching the blind which allowed for diversity. The most crucial element of education I had during this time was the introduction to braille technology, specifically the BrailleNote. This technology helped me greatly with Braille skills and I began to compete more equally with my peers.

In Middle School, I began to upgrade and advance in my technology skills. I started using an iPad connected by Bluetooth to a braille display. I was able to get information I needed rapidly by downloading text books and accessing digital media. I started to learn the computer by basic typing on a qwerty keyboard and using the screen reader JAWS. David began to teach me about crossing streets and public transport. I started using the bus system and light rail in my mobility lessons.

In High School, my classes became more advanced. I began using a scientific talking calculator and laptop. There are around 1,500 students in my high school and I do the same work as them with assistive technology. At this time, I had mastered the Braille code and my time with a Braille teacher decreased to one class period a day. I also started learning mobility routes that I would travel on my own and crossing lighted intersections.

All in all, Columbia Regional has been by my side my entire life. Their educational specialist have played a critical role in who I am as a blind person. It's not just what they've taught me in Braille and mobility skills, but also how to be a confident blind man in a sighted world. My future plans include attending Portland Community College in Fall of 2019 to study community relations and advocacy.

Thank You.

Sent from Ben Schumacher

Dear Honorable Members of the Oregon Legislature,

My name is Kadie Boivin and my daughter, Juliette, was born with Congenital Glaucoma. Congenital Glaucoma is a chronic condition of the eye and optic nerve which can easily lead to blindness throughout her life. Juliette has endured countless surgeries, eye needling, lasering and numerous other eye procedures in the attempt to save the little vision she still has. By the time Juliette was two years old, glaucoma had taken the vision in her left eye and left her clinging to the remaining vision she has in her right eye.

As soon as she was enrolled in public school Kindergarten, Juliette has had the amazing benefit of the teachers at Southern Oregon Program for the Visually Impaired. Since Juliette's vision was not stabilized until after she was over 2 years old, she was extremely far behind her other classmates in letter, color, shape recognition—all the basic things you learn as in infant and toddler with normal vision, but Juliette was legally blind at those points in her life.

Juliette is now a Sophomore at Crater High School in Central Point Oregon, and due to the Teachers of the Visually Impaired, she is thriving! Without the help provided by April Love, her Teacher of the Visually Impaired, she would have surely dropped out of public school due to falling so far behind in her classes and lacking the confidence to feel like a "normal" student. Not only has April taught Juliette the basics needed to excel and keep up with her school work, but she has also been there every step of the way in ensuring Juliette receives the help she needs in the classroom and around campus. She tours the school campus with Juliette before the new year starts, she meets with teachers throughout the year to discuss Juliette's needs within the classroom, and she works with Juliette when she misses extended days of school for her numerous specialist appointments and hospital stays. April also provides Juliette with an outlet in her on-going struggle with this eye condition. She is a teacher, an advocate, and a role model for her as she marches through her school career.

Juliette has also had the pleasure of working directly with Braillist, Andrea. It was suggested when Juliette was in the 8th grade we start a more "pro-active" approach with her impending blindness and teach her Braille so she will be fully prepared and empowered if and when her "good" eye starts to lose vision. Andrea has worked relentlessly with Juliette over the last 3 years to ensure she has the tools necessary to combat her continual vision loss during this very difficult time in her life.

Please consider funding this ever-important program. Without the teachers at Southern Oregon Program of the visually Impaired, we would surely be lost, and our daughter would be devasted. This program is VITAL to families like us, who continually struggle watching their children fight to simply lead a "normal" life.

Best regards,
Christopher and Kadie Boivin
School District 6
Central Point, Oregon

Lisa,

I'm Charlee Sheets' mom and have been a part of the Columbia Regional Program and early intervention program since birth. She has a severe to profound hearing loss.
We have been so fortunate to have access to these services.
Charlee is in the first grade now and has been really struggling in school. Having a hearing loss so profound makes hearing instructions extremely challenging! I felt so panicked that maybe we couldn't mainstream her. Carol Jo, her teacher Mrs. Bertrand, and reading specialist Nicole Howard have blown us away! I cannot begin to express our gratitude. They have gone above and beyond to help Charlee. They have researched ways to help her learn with her hearing loss going above and beyond the call of duty! Without them there is no way Charlee would be excelling now! Since they've orchestrated a new plan Charlee is reading now. She is understanding math concepts and solving problems. Charlee is back to her amazing self because of the confidence she has in herself now. She was coming home in tears not feeling as smart as the other kids! We are beyond grateful and I will say it again and again! If it wasn't for this program she wouldn't be where she is now! Please, please don't cut funding! My Charlee wouldn't be the same.

Christine Sheets

February 14, 2019

Dear Governor Brown and Honorable Members of the Legislature,

As you make challenging budget decisions with never enough to go around, please consider the importance of a program such as Columbia Regional Program to parents of children experiencing disability. Parents of children with challenges are often isolated and left without the resources they need to support their children and themselves. The free and accessible resources such as the Autism Parent Group CRP provides can be a lifeline for families who would otherwise struggle alone. Mine is an example of such a family. A provider from the early childhood education program in our county gave us a flyer about Columbia Regional Program. With a newly diagnosed aggressive toddler and a newborn baby as well, I was so overwhelmed that I didn't attend for many months. I was lonely and depressed as it became more and more clear that my usual supports were inadequate for these new challenges.

Once I attended the CRP Autism Parent Group, I realized that it I should have found a way to go sooner. Our personal friends and family, while well-meaning were not the only community we needed. It was so helpful to talk with other parents, make connections, and get expert advice from the group leaders at the parenting class. It was well worth giving up a Saturday morning to learn, get new and useful resources, and hear other families' stories. For many of us, this was a singular opportunity to talk with other adults about the struggles we face and get help and ideas for how to cope and support our children's myriad challenges. I made friends with moms I met in the group and our kids love playing together. I found people that understood and accepted us and our struggles without judgement or reserve. Beyond the personal connections, I was able to access tangible help as well.

Katie Byerly, Marci Hammel, and Jessica Lyerla provided amazing resources and information that made an immediate impact on our daily lives as we navigated supporting our autistic child. Each monthly session was full of great information and helped me better understand the autistic brain and the function of my child's behaviors. We also gained access to a trove of online resources organized in the group's LiveBinder. I have referred back to it many times when searching for a social story or visual resource. Beyond the digital world, our leaders provided physical (laminated!) copies of visual routines, daily schedules, and charts, as well as community resources and literature we could take home and use immediately. The learning and resources from these classes made a positive difference in our lives, and we continue to use them daily. The amount of information available was astounding and our facilitators had our best interests in mind as they did everything they could to vet resources and provide useable and relevant content to help overwhelmed parents.

Thank you for taking time to listen to my story and consider the significance of a program like CRP's autism parenting group. Raising a child with special needs isolating. Resources like the autism parenting group provides are a lifeline to parents in need. Community, education, and support cannot be valued high enough to families like mine, and they are not easy to come by. Please restore previous funding and fully fund the Columbia Regional Program so that more families will not be left alone without help or community. Thank you for your service to our state and communities.

Sincerely,

Nicole Couture Dandrea
teachercouture@gmail.com

Dear Governor Brown and honorable members of the legislature,

Thank you for taking the time to hear what I have to say. My name is Lindsay Alexander and I live in Portland with my husband and our five year old son Champ. Champ attends kindergarten at a Portland public school.

The day Champ was born I became part of a club. I had no idea then and it would take me a couple years to figure this out but once I did in all honesty I felt sad and angry. It's truly hard to put into words all the feelings I felt at that time in our lives. Heart break, scared, sorrow, loneliness, all mixed into one but most of all I was truly terrified! I felt alone but yet as much as I wanted to not be alone I wanted to not be a member of this club even more! But I was, I was the mother of a special needs child and with that you automatically become a member of this club.

Champ was born with a cleft palate. He had a feeding tube the first 4 months of his life and a corrective surgery around 11 months. We were told speech could be hard for him. At this point I was feeling like the worst was behind us and for 6 months I felt like I had a happy healthy baby. When Champ was a year and a half he started to self harm, he had no way to communicate and would beat his face. That next year before his diagnosis was so hard for our family! On Champ's 2 and a half year birthday he was diagnosed with severe non verbal autism and I officially entered the club.

After I grieved the diagnosis and being part of the club I went to town! I lived autism all day everyday! Before Champ's diagnosis I didn't know anything about autism and made it my goal to learn as much as I could to help my son. He saw more specialists than I could count and was in therapy 5 days a week. I was taking weekly classes and often workshops and conferences on weekends. I was finding some hope for our son and our family with the help we were getting but I couldn't get over how hard it was trying to gather all the knowledge and resources and just feeling overwhelmed and alone.

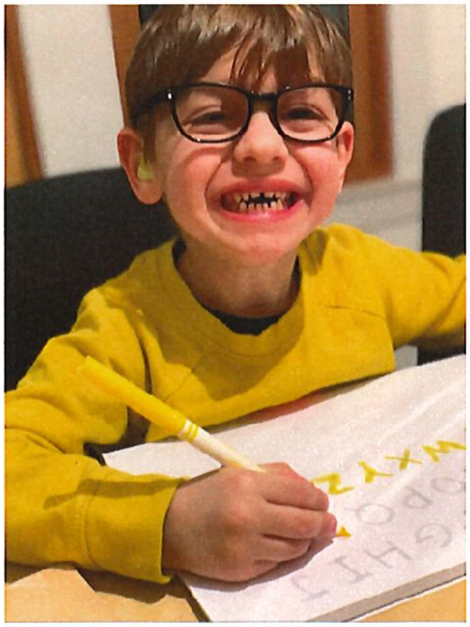
That's when I was introduced to Columbia Regional Program's parent training series. All the classes and workshops I had taken before were helpful but they usually highlight a topic and that's it. CRP is amazing in that each class highlights a topic as well but they also have endless resources, always willing to get off topic to help someone in need, a educator who has adult children with autism, they have the most knowledge and resources I've ever seen gathered together out of all the organizations I've worked with but most of all is the wonderful comforting loving space they have created where they encourage the parents/caregivers to interact and support each other, something I haven't found anywhere else! I left my first CRP class thinking for the first time: THIS IS MY CLUB! It was that moment I stopped feeling sorry for myself, the anger and sadness turned to hope and thankfulness! I no longer felt alone. I have so much I could say about CRP! I could say how the handful of educators have more knowledge than all the doctors and specialists I've met combined and I've met a LOT!! I could tell you about the friends I have made in the class and friendships and play dates they have brought me and my son, I could tell you how I have watched with my own eyes mothers, grandfathers, caregivers come in desperate and defeated and in 1 class leave hopeful and energized. It can get real! Sometimes we laugh together, sometimes there are tears shed, some happy more sad but it's real and it's what we need! I could tell you about the time a mother broke down because of her suicidal 16 year old daughter and how I felt the whole room (most of which have younger children) fill with anxiety as we all added another future fear to our lists. But I needed to hear this, we needed to hear this and she needed us! I found a resource for suicidal teens with autism and was able to give it to that mom at the next class. The thing about being a special needs parent is being educated and always trying to be one step ahead but having people that understand, can relate and truly care is just as important and something I had never felt before CRP! It takes a village to raise a child but it takes a larger village to raise a special needs child and CRP is a huge part of our village! CRP offers something we can't find or even buy anywhere else!! I know the parent training series classes are only a small part of what CRP does for our community. The education, support and tools they offer parents/caregivers/educators and the community is one of a kind and for our families priceless! I have seen with my own eyes CRP help and change the lives of so many people! With the right resources I have seen first hand that special needs children can do more than we could ever imagine for them, it's all about education and resources!! Please don't take this HUGE resource away from us! I am asking from the bottom of my heart PLEASE restore and fully fund Columbia Regional Program!!

Thank you,

Lindsay Alexander

Dear Legislator,

Thank you from the bottom of my heart for supporting Oregon families who rely on the amazing services being provided through the Columbia Regional Program. Almost a year ago we found out that our son Walter had moderate hearing loss. We were surprised, but weren't shocked —at 3 1/2, he was severely speech delayed and relied on his twin sister, Wini to do most of his talking for him. On top of that, he was behind other children his age both cognitively and socially. As first time parents with full-time jobs, a set of twins, and a child-care payment larger than our home mortgage, we were already pretty overwhelmed. Not only did we have to shell out thousands of dollars for a set of hearing aids, we also had to begin the process of navigating the complex world of having, supporting and advocating for a child who has hearing loss. We had no idea what to do or where to begin. Fortunately, soon after getting Walter fitted with his first set of hearing aids, we were introduced to the Columbia Regional Program and began working with Diana Kincaid, M.Ed, Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education Teacher of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH Services).



Diana jumped right into things and immediately helped us establish a set of goals and a plan to achieve them. She worked closely with us, and helped us figure out how to adapt and adjust our behaviors and communication styles to better support Walter's needs and improve his verbal communication. In school, Walter was struggling. He couldn't stay focused, he hardly participated and would often walk away from group activities and play by himself. After spending some time in the classroom with Walter and his teachers, Diana started to suggest small changes, and began training the teachers on how they might better support his unique needs —sitting him closer to activities, making sure he's facing them when they give him instructions, confirming that he heard, etc.

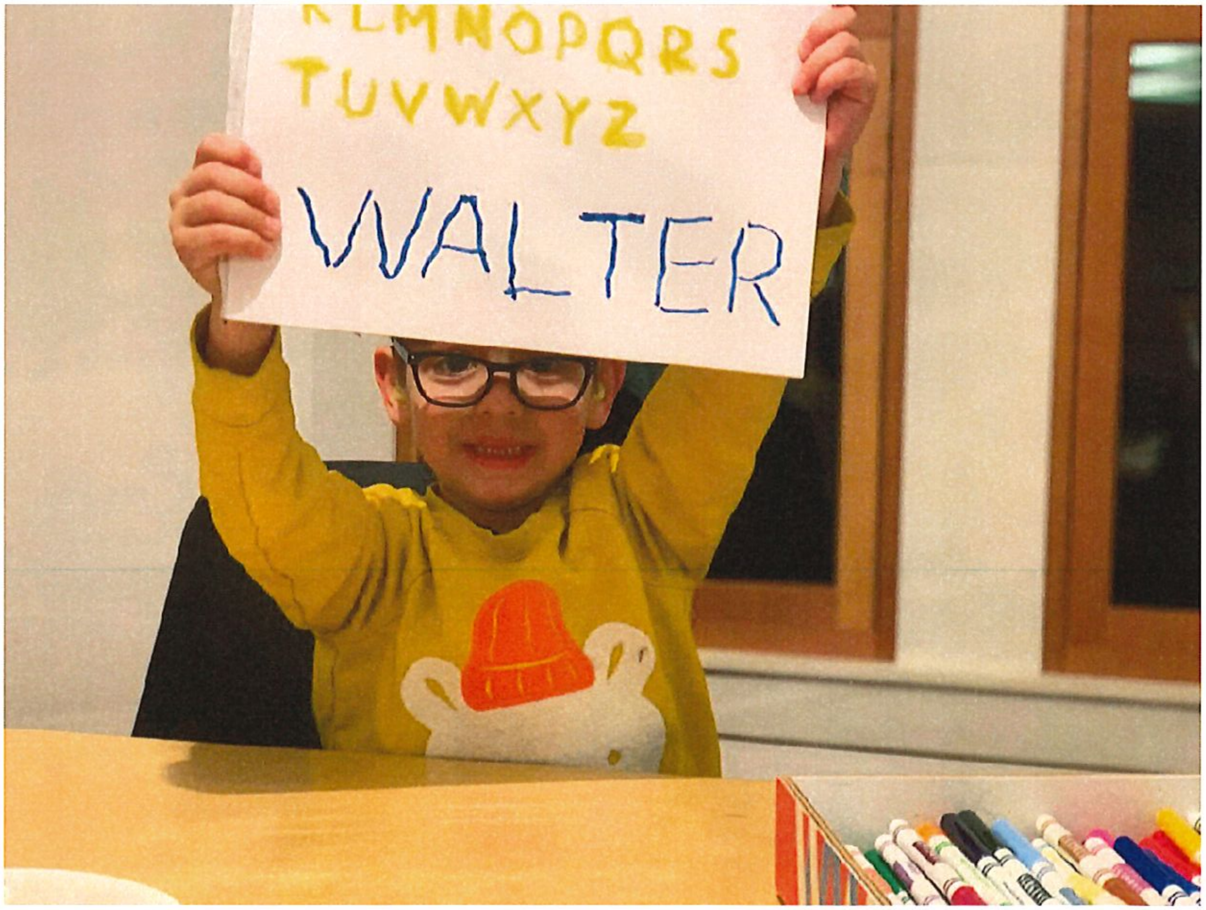
On top of this, Diana also installed an FM system in Walter's school and trained the teachers on how to use it. The FM system enables his teachers to more clearly communicate with Walter by broadcasting their voice, via a lapel mic, directly into his hearing aids at a volume that can be heard over other classroom sounds. It's been absolutely amazing to see the impact on Walter's life. Walter has come so far in the last 8 months:

Before we got support Walter spoke in single word sentences. Today he is confident carrying on conversations with other kids as well as adults.

Before we got support Walter tended to drop out of group activities in the classroom. Today he is engaged, eager to learn, and excited share his learnings.

Before we got support Walter was disruptive, he didn't know what was expected of him, and he struggled in interactions with other children his age. Today he tells you when he can't hear you, clearly communicates what he needs, and confidently engages with his peers. You could say he's even become a social butterfly.

Before we got support Walter showed little interest in learning. Today he is fascinated by books and puzzles, loves to tell stories, and is even beginning to write.
Before we got support we thought Walter might have to be held back or attend an

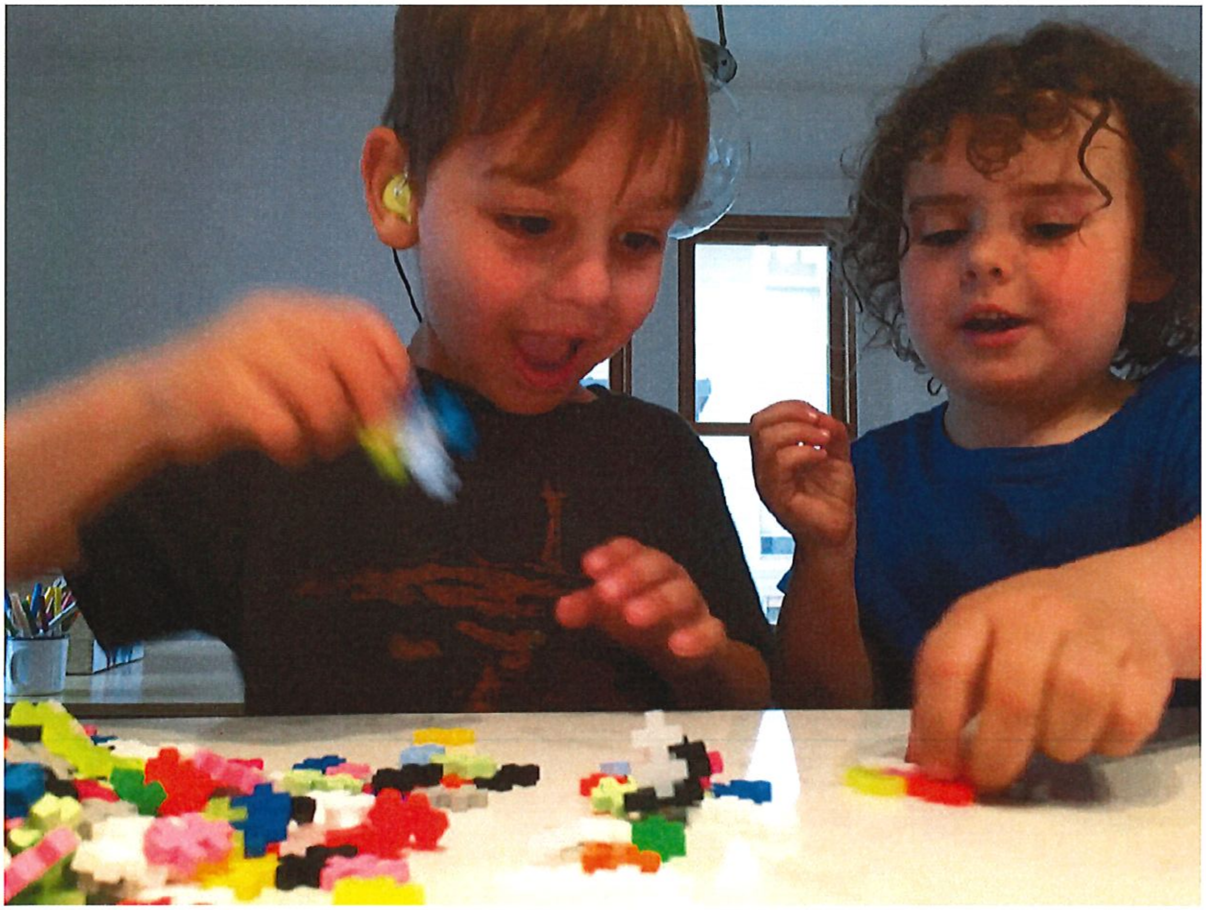


alternative school, Today we can confidently say he is ready for kindergarten, and he will be going to public school with his twin sister.

This above list represents only a handful of the amazing things Diana Kincaid and the Columbia Regional Program, have done for Walter. The impact is almost immeasurable —not just for Walter, but also for us. Needless to say Diana and the Columbia Regional Program have had a monumental impact on Walter's early childhood development and we hope that this program will continue to receive the adequate funding that it needs to have a positive impact in ours and other Oregon families lives.

Kind Regards,

Sara Manzo and Matthew Baranauskas
(Parents of Walter and Wini)



February 19, 2019

The Honorable Kate Brown,
Governor State of Oregon
900 Court St NE,
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Governor Brown and Members of the Legislature,

I am a parent of a wonderful 13-year-old son with special needs.

My son suffered a traumatic brain injury at birth and is "non-verbal", uses a wheelchair, feeding tube, visually impaired and has the most beautiful set of eyes you've ever seen. Recently, I have found out there may be cuts to a very important program Tyson is involved in, Columbia Regional Program (CRP) based out of Portland. I wanted to share a little insight into Tyson's experience with CRP.

We live in The Dalles and he has therapists who drive here weekly from the Portland area and provide services and equipment to him he would not otherwise have access to. If the funding for these services are eliminated or reduced it would be devastating to his growth and development. I have been in Special Education at the High School level for 20 years now and CRP has been instrumental in the lives of our students and now my own child.

As a rural community, we need this program to stay intact to serve these outlying regions and families who do not have access to the level of experience the therapists from CRP bring. I believe if funding is cut, the state of Oregon is going to see a lot these kiddos who have specific orthopedic, vision, hearing and mobility needs that will not be met. CRP not only provides equipment for children at school, but also for children who are home bound. Some of these resources provide families with the equipment they need for their children to remain in their homes and not seek additional state funding for them. The program "loans" equipment to students, this is essential, without the "loans" and "trials" of equipment, we would not know what would work best for our child. Too many times we have purchased some piece of expensive medical equipment only to find out it doesn't fit our son's needs. When doing a quick run through of Tyson's medical equipment, I see things in which we have on a loan basis or CRP has helped us get through insurance after finding out it is much needed for his overall well-being, communication and development.

Having a child with Special Needs is by no means cheap or easy. Having a program that believes in your child and gives them an opportunity to communicate and interact with their world, provide basic (yet highly specialized) equipment, resources and therapists to help them remain in their homes or schools safely...That is irreplaceable. A cut in this program is a cut to some of the neediest and highly deserving population we have in the state of Oregon.
It is hard to put a number on the cost of equipment we have "borrowed" over the past 13 years, and what it has saved us financially, but I can tell you the services are invaluable to us and our son in so many more ways than just financial.

One day, after driving hours in yucky weather and seeing dozens of kids along the way, Tyson's Assistive Technology Practitioner Ruth McKee made one last stop at our home. We tried several sites on the wheelchair over the years to put a communication switch in a location for Tyson to access and use a 'Talking Device". On this particular day, Ruth asked Tyson if he wanted to try his knee, he said "Yes" with a long blink, she explained to him he would have to move his knee to activate it, he did! And now he uses the knee switch often. We made it a conversation button, he would ask questions, tell jokes and play music for people. For the first time ever...he was able to have "conversations" with all kinds of people. We recorded his favorite song on there to motivate him to use it all the time. In the summer of 2017, he attended a musical concert to see Michael Franti, he "talked" with Michael using his switch and Franti thought it was the coolest thing ever. He invited Tyson to come up on stage and start the song. Franti introduced him to the crowd and talked about his form of communication, and let me tell you, the whole crowd of thousands of people heard his song, his voice, his special way of communicating.

That was the moment the life of my son had many possibilities open up, because he was heard.

Imagine the feeling of being heard when for over a decade you had not been.

I speak on His behalf, on the behalf of the hundreds of students I have taught over the years and for all the Children who need these services to remain as they are, if not better.

This is a tiny example of how ONE life can be impacted by the services of Columbia Regional Program. Considering Ruth McKee serves 22 school districts and 3 Education Service Districts, and she came to our house that day as she has over the years and had the faith in him and the knowledge and experience to try one more thing. Ruth is currently one of three therapists who provide services for Tyson at CRP.

Please take a few minutes and watch the links below to see how ONE life is impacted by these services.

Links to YouTube videos of Tyson using his CRP technology

https://youtu.be/GV8qJOXOgqg Tyson Talks using Adaptive technology

https://youtu.be/foNXaY8p0mo Tyson on Stage with Michael Franti

Warm Regards,

Jennifer Rose-Wellar
2733 E. 16th St.
The Dalles, Oregon 97058
541-300-0864
jennwellar@gmail.com

February 17th, 2019

To: Senator Michael Dembrow

Re: In support of Oregon's Regional Programs for Children with Low Incident Disabilities

Dear Senator Dembrow,

I am a parent of non verbal child with autism. Our son directly benefited the services from Oregon Regional that are currently selected to include in the cuts in 2019/20 budget.
Our son started using these services when he was five years old. At the time the team from Oregon Regional made their first home visit with our family and their support have yielded and immediate positive results. The team set up our house with visual signs that made our son to effectively communicate with his needs and wants. Thus removing the daily frustration caused by the lack of effective communication a common problem with non verbal children. The team also helped us succeed in making our son become less dependent in many daily tasks, e.g. eating, dressing, brushing teeth. One of the most important support from Oregon Regional was helping our son to be potty trained.
Oregon Regional team have supported our 11 year old son at school and at home. Such continued support played a large role in making a more stable life for our family.
We cannot imagine what life would have been without these programs.
Please keep Oregon Regional programs going and keep children like our son lead a more comfortable and predictable life.

Sincerely,

Musse Olol & Amina Afrah
10623 NE Fremont St.
Portland, Oregon 97220
(503)231-4183

January 6, 2019

To: The Honorable Members of the Legislature

From: Kristin L. Smalley, Parent

Re: Reduction in Funding for Regional Autism Programs

It has come to my attention that the Oregon Legislature is considering reducing the funding for Regional Autism Programs by $5.9 million. For a program that is already underfunded and serving an increasingly large population of very high and complex needs individuals, this news is devastating.

I have experienced firsthand how vital the Regional Autism Program is for individuals with this diagnosis when my now twenty-seven year old daughter was diagnosed with Autism in December of 1993. As a career educator, I knew how this diagnosis would impact the ability of my daughter to learn and develop. I knew that she would face, at times, insurmountable obstacles in her quest to overcome her severe impairment in the areas of social interactions and language. Imagine finding out that your almost three year old daughter has the language skills of a six month old. I have taught children in grades one through six and nothing could prepare me for the type of instruction my daughter would require to find her place as a functional member of society. Luckily, we had the Regional Autism Program to rely on for help and assistance.

Throughout her years in early childhood education and on through her years in public education, the Regional Autism Program was an essential component of her educational program. Her learning style was vastly different from both her neuro-typical peers and the rest of the Special Education population. Luckily, the Regional Autism Program was there to help train and support the teachers and assistants along with support to myself and my husband as co-educators. When our daughter was diagnosed she was the only child with an Autism diagnosis in the Hermiston SD. Over the years I have witnessed an explosion in the number of students with ASD. These students require unique learning opportunities to acquire the skills necessary to become functional members of society.

Luckily, our daughter is a success story due to the strong support she received during her school career. She is currently employed as a dishwasher at our local Pizza Hut four days a week. Thanks to the training she received, she has a strong social group and enjoys participating in Special Olympics and various activities at our local Arc. Our daughter has definitely become a very functional and contributing member of our local community. She inspires other people to give their best and work hard.

Even at the current level of funding, the Regional Autism Programs are stretched very thin. There will never be enough funding to cover all of the costs of educating the students in Oregon, but I ask you to strongly reconsider making cuts to this valuable program.

Sincerely,

Kristin L. Smalley

February 13th, 2019

Dear Governor Brown and Honorable Members of the Legislature,

Have you ever tried to communicate without speaking or writing? You should try it for a day. You have to use a lot of behavior in order to get your needs met and your "voice" heard. My son Sam is 8 years old. He is autistic and experiences complex communication and sensory needs. We have used Columbia Regional Program as a resource since he was diagnosed at age 2.

What is a regional program? Why do we need them? I can tell you without hesitation that without the regional program in our area, Columbia Regional Program, my son would not have access to his free and appropriate public education. Without our school IEP team getting expert training and one on one support from the professional, specialized employees at Columbia Regional I am positive a more restrictive setting would have been suggested for my son.

Teachers and team members at Sam's school work hard to teach Sam to read and write, do math and participate in his daily school routine alongside his friends. While they are wonderful teachers, kids like Sam with complex communication needs are sadly, not often taught in general education settings, so gaining hands on experience can be limited for teachers statewide. Columbia Regional Program (and all the regional programs) are a professional, skilled and vital tool that teachers and staff can access statewide. It takes a team that's "all in" and it takes meaningful, expert support for that team in order to help Sam learn. My son deserves to learn alongside his peers. He deserves to attend the same school as his older sister. He deserves a chance to make friends and learn the same things that every 3rd grader in Oregon is learning, even if his learning looks different from the other children in his class.

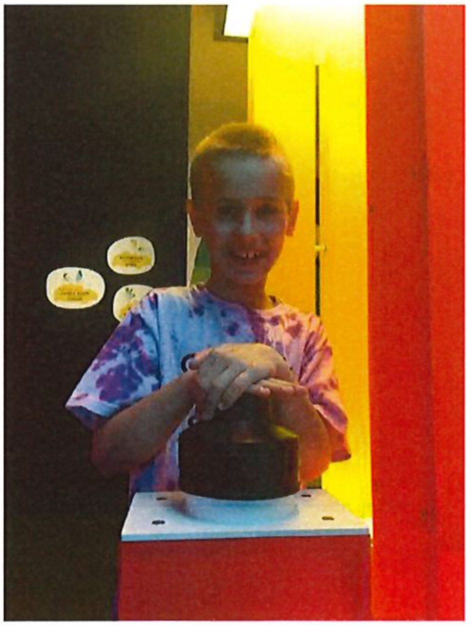
He doesn't deserve these things because he's "special". He deserves these things because ALL kids deserve these things, regardless of whether they experience a disability or not. Just because Sam's communication needs are more complex doesn't mean he needs a new location with "expert" teachers, who are often not experts or specially trained in low instance disabilities. Special education is a service, NOT a place. Columbia Regional Program supports the school team so that they have the tools they need and feel confident supporting Sam in his natural school environment.

If we are truly to support ALL children experiencing disability at school, if we truly mean what we say when we tell people and families experiencing disability to dream big dream for their futures and live whole lives in community, then we MUST fully fund regional programs in Oregon. My family is asking you to please fully fund regional programs in Oregon. We are counting on you.

Sincerely,

Karen Houston
Gresham, Oregon

Sam with his class



Kimberly Sorensen

75227 Hagen Rd, Pendleton, OR 97801 541-969-2853

12/14/18

To The Oregon Legislation:

My name is Kimberly Sorensen. My daughter is Ellen Paulsen. Ellen is 15 years old and manages her malady of uveitis with grace and dignity. She is legally blind but functions at normal standards, and even excels in many subjects. She participates in regular high school classes and joins in extracurricular activities such as: acting, choir, speech and debate and swim team.

Ellen and I are very grateful for our highly esteemed resource and friend, Sharon Zenger, employed by Eastern Oregon Regional Services-Vision Department. Sharon is a low vision aide/teacher and has helped Ellen tremendously by showing intense interest in managing her low vision at school. She is interactive with Ellen, as well as all of Ellen's teachers, making sure she is using every device possible to ensure the best education for Ellen. All teachers appreciate the effort Sharon puts forth, too. For example, explaining how to enlarge paper assignments to the proper size and using the Smart Board in connection with her iPad and CCTV.

Sharon provided The Ruby, also. This tool enables Ellen to do homework, get assignments finished and read anything assigned.

Regional Vision Services gives tremendous support to families with disabilities. I am deeply grateful to this organization for providing us with what we need. I believe without these services our children would be struggling at school and not receiving the proper education. My wish is to have the continued support of Regional Vision Services. It is an invaluable resource for Oregon families with disabilities.

Thank you for your time and please know we are always hoping to have people like Sharon to help guide our children as they navigate through their impressionable years and gain the confidence they need to succeed into the future.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Sorensen

Kimberly Sorensen

February 27, 2019

Dear Oregon Legislators:

Our daughter Maggie is a sweet young person, who was born with developmental disabilities and has physical limitations similar to those of a person with cerebral palsy. As a result, she needs assistance and modifications for many school and other daily activities.

We have been fortunate that throughout her schooling Maggie has received the physical and occupational therapy services provided for students with orthopedic impairment other "low incidence" disabilities. The therapists involved have provided direct therapy services and train classroom staff to help Maggie so that she can effectively and safely participate in school activities.

As an example, the physical therapy services she receives are especially helpful for Maggie's mobility and range of motion. At school, she uses a standing frame and manual and power wheelchairs. The therapists have helped train classroom staff so that neither they nor Maggie get injured when she switches between wheelchairs or gets into her standing frame. Other therapy activities prevent Maggie from having injuries associated with contractures. The standing frame prevents fractures associated with osteoporosis and maximizing her movement supports her breathing and health of her cells. Overall, these services improve the lives of Maggie and other students with similar needs and reduce the costs of hospitalizations incurred from preventable illnesses and injuries. In addition, it protects the school staff from injuries, preventing staff absences and loss of wages. We think the investment in these therapy services by Oregon taxpayers is money well-spent.

However, we recently heard that you are considering cutting the budget for these types of services for Oregon students by **20%**. We think that would be a terrible mistake! We know that Oregon has budget troubles and there are difficult decisions to make, but think a wise principle to use would be to first protect funding for programs for Oregon's most vulnerable populations. After that, you can consider where to cut or find other revenue sources.

Thanks much!

Sincerely,
Maggie's parents,
Bill Gerth and Kimberly Cleveland, RN

February 28, 2019
RE: Importance of adequate funding for Regional Programs

Dear Honorable Members of the Oregon Legislature,

My family is currently receiving services from Cascade Regional's 'Low Incidence' Program. Our son, Liam Russell, is eligible to receive Regional special education because he has a neuromuscular disability called Spinal Muscular Atrophy Type 2; he qualifies due to orthopedic impairment. Liam has been a power wheelchair user since the age of 20 months old and has benefitted from the specialized services and knowledge of occupational and physical therapists in his public schools. Now a freshman at Corvallis High School, Liam has been receiving OT and PT services from Cascade Regional since he began at Jefferson Elementary 10 years ago.

Liam is a stellar student and has always participated fully in general education classes and activities. Occupational and physical therapists have helped assess, support, and improve accessibility, safety, and inclusion at each of the public schools he has attended here in Corvallis: Jefferson Elementary School, Linus Pauling Middle School, and Corvallis High School. The OT and PT are key members of Liam's IEP team and his ongoing success.

It is critical that Cascade Regional's 'Low Incidence' Program continue to be adequately and appropriately funded not just for my child, but for so many others as well.

Sincerely,

Lynn Russell
940 NW 30th St
Corvallis, Oregon 97330

8th grade field trip to Mary's Peak

CHS Spartan Robotics Team 997

January 5, 2019

Dear Honorable Members of the Oregon Legislature,

RE: Central Oregon Regional Program (CORP)

We are currently receiving services from Central Oregon Regional Program (CORP) for our son, Warren Rasmussen, who has a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Warren is currently 9 years old and in the 4th Grade at Madras Elementary in Madras, OR.

While participating in a NICU after care program, he was identified at two years old to be showing signs and symptoms of ASD. After further medical evaluation, through the PEDAL Clinic, at three years old he was diagnosed with ASD.

Overall, Warren has received Regional Services for eight years. He had Early Childhood Development starting at two years old, Pre-preschool/*ABA* at three and four years old, and Autism Specialist, SLP, and OT for Kindergarten through 4th Grade.

These services have been and continue to be invaluable to our son's developmental and educational growth. The insight, skills, techniques, and information that these professionals (Autism Specialist, SLP, and OT) provide to our son, his educators, and us (parents) have shown marked improvements in our son's ability to have verbal communication and conversations, interact more appropriate in school/social settings, and to address his educational learning needs. We believe that with these continued CORP services our son, Warren, will be able to grow up to be an independent and successful individual.

We are beyond grateful for CORP services. They have impressed us with their hard work and dedication to our son and family.

Sincerely,

Jeff Rasmussen
Jefferson County Administrative Officer

Marsha Rasmussen
Jefferson County 509-J Substitute Teacher
mlsrasmussen@gmail.com

December 18, 2018

Dear Honorable Members of the Oregon Legislature,

RE: Central Oregon Regional Program (CORP)

We are currently receiving services from Central Oregon Regional Program (CORP) for our son Jacob Scott who is legally blind due to albinism.

His condition results in impaired vision, nystagmus and extreme photophobia. This condition affects his school work and social interactions.

Jacob has received Regional Services for seven years. These services are invaluable because Jacob would not be able to attend school in a regular classroom setting without them. Jacob learned his fine motor skills from his TVI as a preschooler. As Jacob has grown older and more mature he has received technology and been taught the skills to use it. The technology the service provides allows Jacob to see what the teacher is presenting to his class and participate and interact with his classmates. The skills he has learned from his TVI have allowed him to be self-sufficient and confident in his school work. Jacob would not be able to see or read his school work without these services.

Sincerely,

Carol Scott

Carol C. Scott
19951 Quail Pine Loop
Bend OR 97702

Date: Dec. 19, 2018

Dear Honorable Members of the Oregon Legislature,

RE: Central Oregon Regional Program (CORP)

We are currently receiving services from Central Oregon Regional Program (CORP) for our son ~~or daughter~~ Joseph Shirtcliff who is orthopedically (enter area of disability or diagnosis). impaired, intellectual disability, Deafblind, other health impairment speech/language impaired

His/~~Her~~ ____condition results in

Developmental delays in all areas of life. Requires help with all ADL, walking, feeding orally + tube feeding, mobility + stretches, communicating, etc.

He/~~She~~ __________ has received Regional Services for 12 years. These services are invaluable because they provide the Physical, Speech + Occupational therapy training, Vision, Augmentative Communication aids + instruction necessary for him to function + learn.

(Share a story about how Regional Services have been instrumental in your son/daughter being successful in school).

Without all these different areas of interventions and accommodation for him to be able to learn + access education successfully, he would be lost in school and unable to receive his legally mandated FAPE. We are grateful for so many of the wonderful individuals working with our child through the CORP programs. Many we've known for years since going through EI, ECSE and now through 7th grade. Please continue to fund these necessary programs for our child + many others!

Sincerely,

Your name

Your address

Sincerely, Carmela + Ken Shirtcliff

2849 Perlette Ln. Bend. OR 97703

541-390-6614

Attach a photo of your child if you would like

December 19, 2018

Dear Honorable Members of the Oregon Legislature,

RE: Central Oregon Regional Program (CORP)

We are currently receiving services from Central Oregon Regional Program (CORP) for our sons, Jayden and Jacob, who were both born without arms.

Our sons' condition results in difficulty with accessing their educational environment and self care skills such as toileting and dressing.

Jayden has received Regional Services for 7 years, and Jacob has received Regional Services for 4 years. These services are invaluable because they have allowed our sons to have access to their education and are helping them become more independent in self care skills.

Jayden and Jacob both use their feet to write, eat, and do any other fine motor manipulation. Through the assistance of their Physical Therapist, Occupational Therapist, and an Adaptive Equipment Specialist, they are able to sit at their desks with their peers and participate in all school activities. They both have specially designed chairs that put them up at the table level, while keeping them safe while climbing onto the chair and sitting. They also have hooks that were designed to help with toileting and dressing. Their Physical Therapist and Occupational Therapist are excellent at looking at the whole child and determining what is the best and safest way to help them be successful in school.

Thank you for considering the needs of my children and many other children by continuing to fund the Regional Services through the Central Oregon Regional Program.

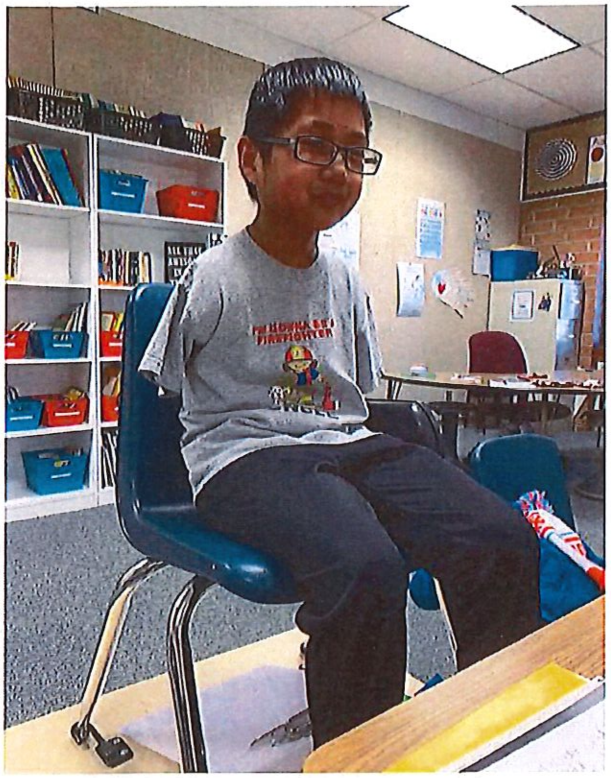
Sincerely,

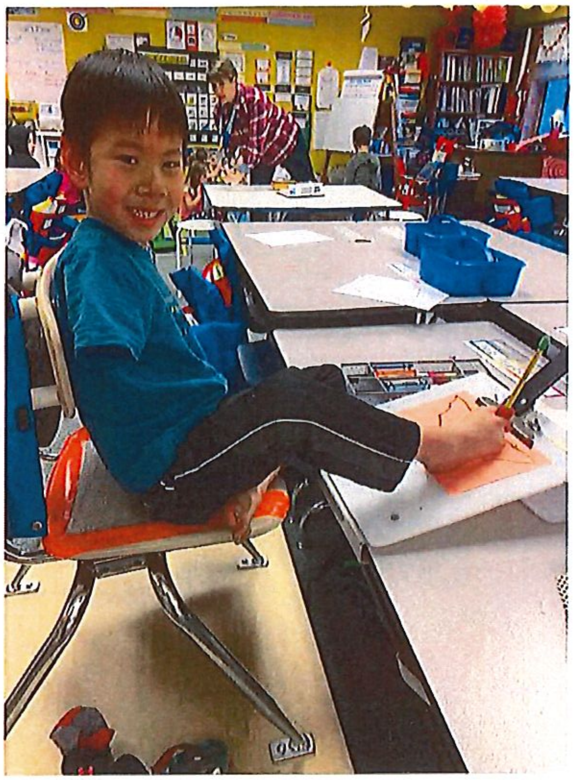
April Tranby

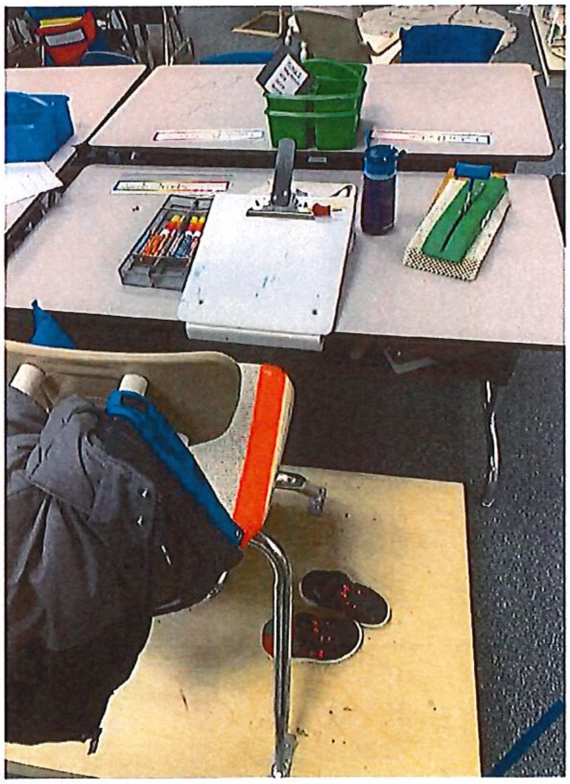
April Tranby

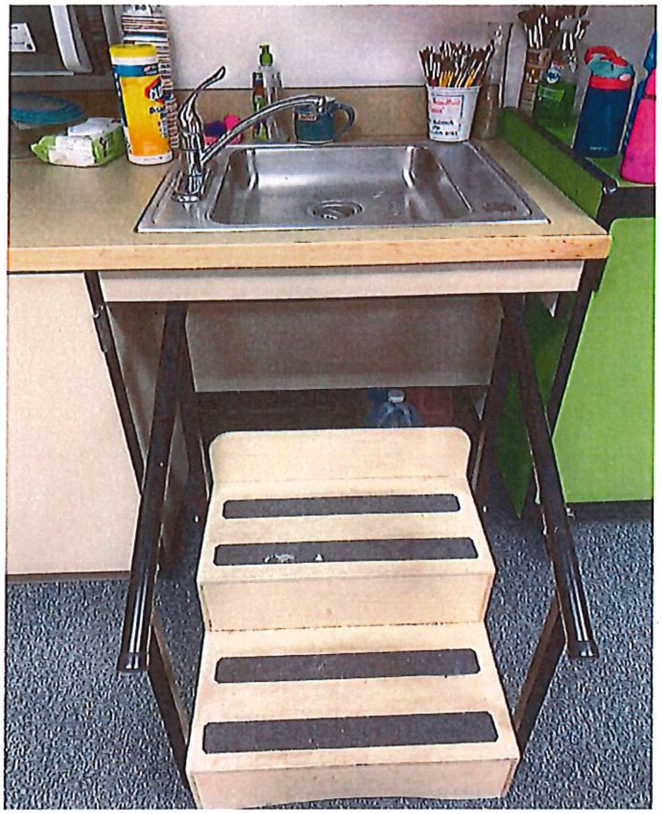
1869 NE Snowbird Ct.

Bend, OR 97701









Date:

Dear Honorable Members of the Oregon Legislature,

RE: Central Oregon Regional Program (CORP)

We are currently receiving services from Central Oregon Regional Program (CORP) for our *son or daughter* Mackenzie who is Deaf *(enter area of disability or diagnosis).*

His/her ____condition results in
Her condition leaves her without access to education and peer interaction, without aid of additive devices and an interpreter.

He/She Mackenzie has received Regional Services for 1 years. These services are invaluable because See Below.

(Share a story about how Regional Services have been instrumental in your son/daughter being successful in school). It's so important because without the services received, she was coming home from school in tears due to exhaustion. She didn't have close friendships with peers. Through the supportive services she loves and is excelling in school! She is well liked and has made a few right relationships with classmate peers. We wouldn't have the happy fun loving child like we do if funding wasn't available to help special kids like ours.

Sincerely,

Your name Justin Hunniecutt

Your address 20779 Beaumont Drive
Bend OR, 97701

Attach a photo of your child if you would like

Date: November 11, 2018

Dear Honorable Members of the Oregon Legislature,

RE: Central Oregon Regional Program (CORP)

We are currently receiving services from Central Oregon Regional Program (CORP) for our *son or daughter* Joseph who is deaf/hypotonia *(enter area of disability or diagnosis).*

His/her ____condition results in leaves him without access to language, both in his own family and in outside interactions. additionally, due to hypotonia, Joey was unable to even hold his head up for months. His overall developmental quotients were incredibly low in language and fine motor skills. He would scream in frustration for hours, despite any attempt to calm him.

He/She Joseph has received Regional Services for 1 years. These services are invaluable because See Below.

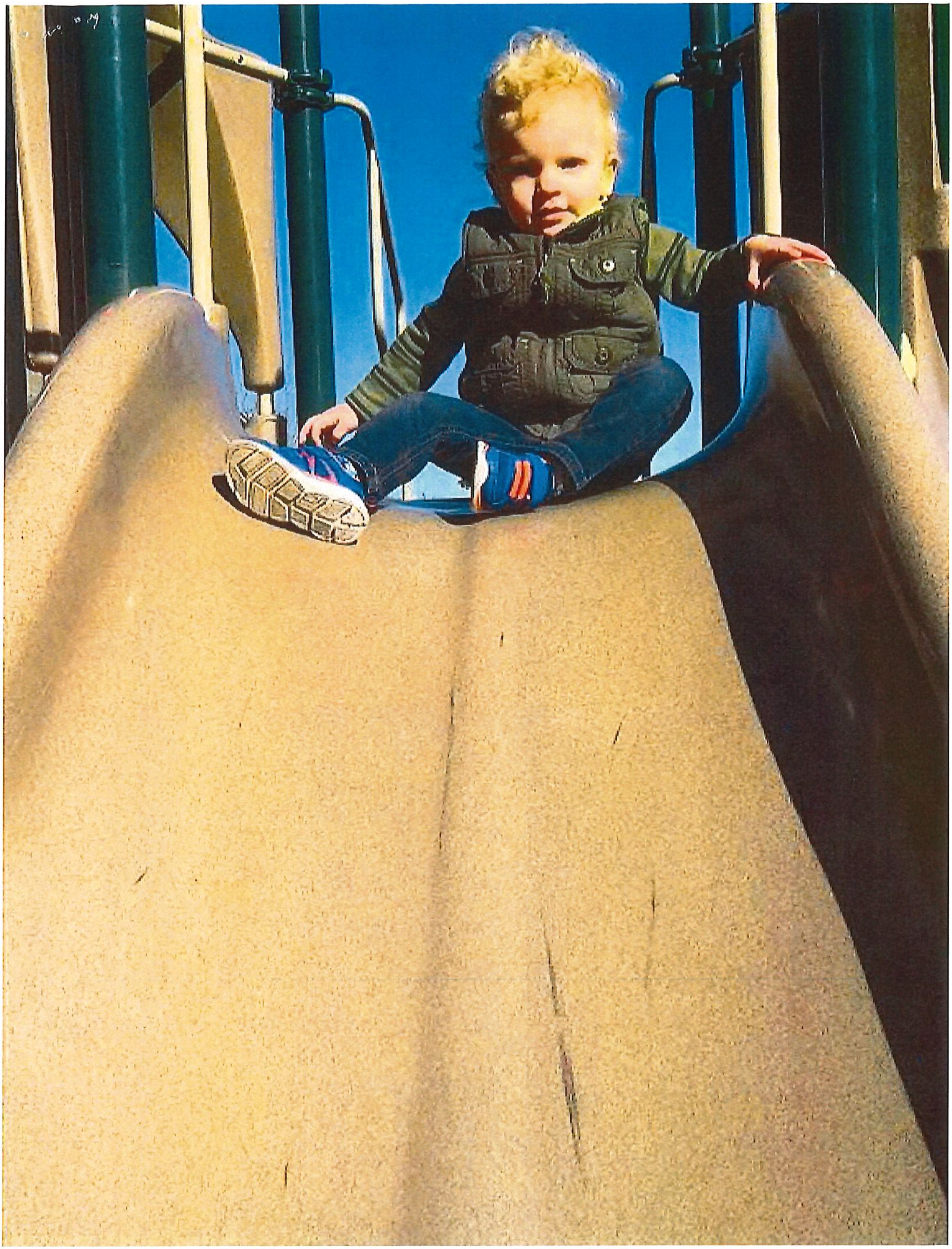
(Share a story about how Regional Services have been instrumental in your son/daughter being successful in school). Through the work of dedicated personnel at High Desert ESD, he is not only holding his head up, with help of ankle braces, he's walking, running, and enjoying outdoor life like all little boys should be able to do. He also has emerging language, both signed and verbally. He is such a happy toddler now!

Sincerely,

Your name Justin Hunniecutt

Your address 20779 Beaumont Drive
Bend, OR 97701

Attach a photo of your child if you would like



Date: Dec 20, 2018

Dear Honorable Members of the Oregon Legislature,

RE: Central Oregon Regional Program (CORP)

We are currently receiving services from Central Oregon Regional Program (CORP) for our *son or daughter* Ariasha who is hard of hearing *(enter area of disability or diagnosis).*

His/her her condition results in
challenges with communication and speech.

He/She She has received Regional Services for 3 years. These services are invaluable because she has been learning sign language as well as how to speak more clearly.

(Share a story about how Regional Services have been instrumental in your son/daughter being successful in school).

Sincerely,

Becky Zingale
20525 Dylan Loop
Bend OR 97702

Your name

Bell Marketing group

January 8, 2019

Dear Honorable Members of the Oregon Legislature,

RE: Central Oregon Regional Program (CORP)

Rarely can you understand life with a child who has special needs unless you have lived it. Once you genuinely comprehend the difficulties in getting the services needed so that a special needs child can function normally at school, you quickly understand the value of a regional program.

My son suffered a traumatic brain injury at birth. He was delayed in his initial developmental marks; slow to start turning over, crawling, and then walking. He was diagnosed on the Autism Spectrum at age three but with cognitive processing delay and Traumatic Brain Injury. We have been in Bend La-Pine School District since he began kindergarten 11 years ago. He started his first day of Kindergarten by punching his teacher in the stomach. His nervous system was so overloaded with stimulants created by the classroom and kids that he did what experts say is ingrained in all of us at the most primitive level–when threatened, fight or flight. He fought.

By reading this you might think this kid shouldn't be in the classroom. That a kid who can't control his body or emotions should not be mainstreamed. Yet you would be wrong. Flash forward to 5th Grade. This same kid, with the insight, skills, techniques, and information of an Autism Specialist, SLP, and OT quickly became one of the most treasured students in class. While behind in grade level, he was reading, doing math, and helping mentor kids younger than he. Jump forward to 8th grade. He went to REALMS Middle School where initially his SPED teachers doubted his ability to socially interact with his peers or keep up a challenging curriculum when he already had deficits. Again, the interjection of specialists, specifically Joe Devine, Traumatic Brain Specialist with High Desert ESD, and my son's educational aide, Jacob not only got through REALMS but ended the year with a standing ovation for a heartfelt speech he gave on-stage in front of nearly 300 people.

My son is now a junior at Bend Senior High School. We are working closely with our regional program, High Desert ESD, to supplement services and training where the school staff lacks skill or resource. He's set to graduate in 2020. He hopes to work with conservationists in helping save the Orcas.

As a nation, we are facing an onslaught of children who have disabilities we do not yet fully understand. Autism. ADHD. Down's Syndrome. We also do not yet fully understand the unique skills or capabilities these kids offer when given the tools and accommodations needed to express their talents. In our case, a regional program that could provide highly skilled professional advice and resources for our district was invaluable in providing my child equal access to education. The beneficiaries of such a program are not only the children but the teachers, parents, and classmates who learn how to work with special education students. Much like a blind person may be mistaken for someone who lacks opportunity. When that blind person is given the tools to read braille, the accommodation to dictate thoughts, they can become the teacher to all of us. My child, and those like him, have the ability within them to inspire, teach, and lead. A regional program gives them the foundation to be more; to be seen as more than their disability.

In a time when school resources are tapped, and money is tight, a regional program offers efficiency and skilled services for a variety of schools who could not access or recruit such talent independently. It also raises the level of educational outcomes as a regional program helps train instructional staff and improve overall student performance. Without them, in my experience, the district would not have been able to provide the tools needed for my child or to meet the legal obligations of his IEP.

Our educational system is strapped for cash and struggles to hire elite candidates due to lack of funding and a low pay scale. With the rise in kids who require highly trained personnel, districts, in general, are finding a gap in professional skills for student need. A regional program like CORP helps fill the gap while still providing an efficient, economical, structure for districts to apply to all schools.

I ask that you continue to support CORP services; that you continue to support special education. That you remember, enabling these kinds of interventions at the public school level may very well provide the next Albert Einstein or Stephen Hawking a chance to rise.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Bell
parent of Jacob Bell
owner of Bell Marketing Group
suzanne@bellmarketinggroup.com
503.422.2996

December 18, 2018

Dear Honorable Members of the Oregon Legislature:

I am writing in support of funding for the Southern Oregon Program for the Visually Impaired. This program has been vital for many in the community, including our granddaughter, Grace. She was born with Septo Optic Dysplasia (SOD), which is a rare congenital malformation syndrome featuring underdevelopment of the optic nerve, pituitary gland dysfunction, and absence of the corpus callosum (a broad band of nerve fibers joining the two hemispheres of the brain). To be diagnosed with SOD, one must have two of the three symptoms. Grace has all three.

Grace's optic nerves are abnormally small and make fewer connections than usual between the eyes and the brain. As a result, her optic nerve hypoplasia has impaired vision in both of her eyes. Due to her condition, Grace received care from birth to three years old from early intervention (vision, occupational & physical therapy). Grace will be four years old in March. She is currently receiving help from Southern Oregon Program for the Visually Impaired. Her teacher of the Visually Impaired, April Love, has followed her since birth and has formed an important connection with Grace. Grace's trust in April has helped her with her development, sensory skills and has made preschool a success. April has provided guidance, encouragement and support to our family when we have felt so lost in this process. This program is incredibly valuable to our family and others who depend on it, and we are so thankful for the role it's played in Grace's development. We are asking that you do not cut funding to Regional Programs, for the sake of Grace and other visually impaired residents of Southern Oregon.

Sincerely,

Brian & Kristen Lowell

Brian and Kristen Lowell


School

January 7, 2019

To Whom it May Concern,

My name is Dana Sherman and I am a Parent to a Deaf and Visually Impaired child in Jackson County Oregon. My son came to my family through foster care when he was 22 months. He was handed to me with one known diagnosis, Deaf, and several unknown diagnosis including Usher Syndrome.

Before meeting my son, I had never encountered a Deaf individual, much less a Deaf and Blind individual which is the prognosis for my adopted son. Jackson County is a fairly small community and the population of Deaf individuals is quite small compared to Salem and Portland. I believe this is the reason that resources for Deaf individuals in our valley are very limited. The teachers and staff at the Southern Oregon Educational Service District have been supporting my family since my son came to me at 22 months. ESD has been my family's only local resource on my son's condition.

ESD has helped my family in ways no other resource in my community could have. ESD has provided a teacher to assist with Noah's Developmental Delay. They have provided Physical Therapy to help Noah learn to walk. They have provided us with amazing Teachers of the Deaf and the Visually Impaired teaching my son how to navigate the world as a Deaf and Visually Impaired individual. ESD's support has helped to create the beautiful, walking, laughing, signing, talking boy that is my son. Without their support, I can say Noah would be a very different, unhappy, unproductive child.

I understand that financial cuts are being considered for our regional programs. My hope is that you will consider the impact of those cuts on not just the budget or bottom line but on the children that will be impacted. The children that will need ESD's support in the future and the children that are being support now need you to financially support ESD so they can grow into productive members of our society.

My son has had a challenging life in his short 9 years. We work every day to help him live as a normal, neuro-typical, child. As a parent, it is heartbreaking to watch my child struggle and suffer in the life he has been given. I am grateful for the support I have received from ESD and indirectly, from you that make the decision to fund the program. Please consider my child when you decide on the funding for ESD. Please call me if you would like further information on the supports we have received from ESD.

Sincerely,

Dana Sherman
541-941-2114

January 7, 2019

Dear Honorable Members of the Legislature,

I am writing to support the Southern Oregon Educational Service District and to illustrate how valuable the services they provide are to families in Oregon. My daughter, Cheyenne, was born in October of 2010 and within a couple months was diagnosed with a profound bilateral hearing loss. My husband and I were totally lost and realized that we had no idea how to raise a deaf child. Neither of us knew of any history of hearing loss in our families and I realized that I had no idea how to go about teaching her things that for our other children were very basic and simple lessons.

Fortunately, we were very quickly connected with the Southern Oregon Educational Service District and met Dale Balme. Ms. Balme became a lifeline from the start and helped us navigate the foreign territory of raising a deaf child. She met with us regularly for the first few years and assisted me by introducing me to the deaf culture and how to deliberately teach my daughter things that other hearing children aren't specifically "taught", but just pick up from their surroundings. We were also assisted with accessing other services such as speech therapy to help Cheyenne continue to progress in her development. When she began school, she was provided with an interpreter that has helped her mainstream fully and very successfully.

Because of the support and training we have been blessed with through SOESD, Cheyenne is being offered the opportunity to reach her full potential and not be held back by the inability to communicate with others. She is able to interact with her peers and inside of her classroom and is doing extremely well academically. Without the support that we received, Cheyenne might have been left behind socially and academically, but instead she is equipped to become successful and independent young lady.

I would ask that you please continue to financially fund these resources that allow our children to reach their potential and become valuable members of our communities.

Thank you,

Sandi Martin

January 18, 2019

To the Honorable Members of the Oregon Legislature:

I am writing to you to express my support to **fund the state's Regional Programs at $43.5 Million**. It is vital that increased and stable finding for Regional Programs is provided so that 10,562 students in Oregon from ages birth to 21 have equitable access to achieve educational success.

Our students who rely on these vital services and supports will suffer without full funding. The proposed general fund of $22.52 million will have unintended consequences. It will lead to less direct services to students that require these supports to be successful. Also, the potential negative impact on educational and functional outcomes for students will be impacted. Additionally, I anticipate a decrease in attendance and graduation rates for students who require these services. Oregon currently ranks 48 out of 50 in graduation rates. This funding is important to support our vision of increasing graduation rates in this state. The reduction in funds is concerning when you take into consideration a 31% increase in students eligible in Autism and 27% increase in students eligible for Deaf/Hard of Hearing from 2007 – 2017.

I am a parent of a child that will be directly impacted by the reduction of these crucial supports. My son experiences Autism. We have personally benefitted from the supports and services that Regional Programs provide. It is through trainings and specialized services in early intervention that we were able to change the trajectory of my son's life. When my son received his Autism diagnosis, we felt very alone as a family and unsure of our next steps. Educators and staff that knew about Autism and were able to provide ongoing education and support allowed us to support our son in accessing his community.

In addition to being a parent of a child who experiences disability, I also support families whose children would qualify for receiving services through our "Regional Low- Incidence Disability Program". These programs are crucial for providing the much-needed supports and services so that our children can learn and indeed thrive within our community. My concern is that if we do not support a funding stream that considers the increase in the number of eligible students, we will be reducing the likelihood of positive outcomes for these children.

Adequate funding for Regional Programs is vital. The impact of the current 20% reduction will have disastrous consequences on the trajectory of our children and reduce the ability to have equitable access to achieve educational success.

Sincerely,

Heather Olivier

January 20, 2019

Dear Honorable Members of the Oregon Legislature,

I am writing in support of funding for the Southern Oregon programs for autism. As you may be aware, autism is a life long condition that has an impact of both families and society at large.The social and emotional cost is one that can be mitigated through educational programs for young children. Generally very young children with a diagnosis of autism may learn the necessary social skills and functional behavior that will enable them to become contributing members of society. Without early intervention, many of them will end up being unable to support themselves and will need life long care atet e expense of the State.

I have two boys with autism who are making their way in the world. One is about to become a Mechanical Engineer and the other a Genetic Engineer. We were fortunate enough to have the services of an autism consultant provided by SO-ESD, a speech pathologist and OT services. It gave me confidence to sit in IEP meetings knowing I was supported by the knowledge of an expert. I found that teachers and administrators were well intentioned but had little or no working knowledge of autism. These professionals gave my children the opportunity to access the education provided by the district, whether it was through therapy or recommendations for accommodations.

It is better to change the lives of individuals with early support. The cost in early intervention will be much less than the cost of care later on. I urge you not to cut funding for these already underfunded services. Our family is fortunate that our sons are able to function in the world, and it is my hope that all families will have the support needed for their children to reach their full potential. Cutting funding in the short term will result in many children like mine falling through the cracks, costing the tax payers much more in the long run.

Yours sincerely

Leona Myburg

Leona Myburg

Dear Legislator,

I want to share with you my family's personal experience with Columbia Regional Program and our concern for adequate funding for this program. Our story starts when my wife and I chose to grow our family through international adoption. In May 2017 we flew from South Africa to our home in Portland, Oregon with our new two-year-old son, Luyanda. Three months after returning home, I took Luyanda to the doctor's office for a routine hearing test where we learned he had bilateral sensorineural hearing loss. We were devastated. We had more questions than answers. We understood that this was a critical time in Luyanda's life to hear because this is when he is learning speech.

Our medical insurance provider, Kaiser, contracts out with OHSU for pediatric hearing aids, and they had a 4 month wait list just to start the process. After the initial shock wore off, we reached out to Columbia Regional Program through our Multnomah County Early Childhood Education referral. This was the best thing that could have happened for our son! We learned they would provide Luyanda with loaner aids that were programed by a licensed audiologist with his hearing prescription until we could get his own through insurance. Within a few weeks of being qualified for the program, Luyanda got fitted with his first hearing aids at CRP (see picture). During this appointment, they took the time to explain everything there is to know about the maintenance and upkeep of his hearing aids. We walked out of the building a lot more confident and informed then when we had walked in.

We were also assigned a Deaf/Hard of Hearing specialist named Sarah Cantwell from the CRP program who came to our house weekly for a year and half. We really appreciated someone teaching us who understands hearing loss and who could make it applicable to Luyanda's life. She guided us through this journey of understanding Luyanda's hearing loss by providing us with tons of helpful information, answering all our questions, and giving us helpful tools we can use to teach our son. Sarah also wrote a detailed letter of how an FM system would benefit Luyanda, which ultimately helped us secure some grant funding, so he could have his own FM system at home. She was amazing and a huge blessing for the whole family.

In July of 2018, Luyanda qualified for the CRP preschool that specializes in deaf and hard of hearing students. After a few weeks at CRP I could see a huge change in Luyanda. He was starting to find his voice through both speech and signs. His confidence began to grow. I still remember the day when Luyanda sat still and intently listened to a book for the first time because someone was signing the words to the book while another was reading the book from behind the children to make sure they could see and hear in both voice and sign. I knew then that our son was in the best place! At CRP preschool, Luyanda has made friends who look like him with hearing aids. He is excited to go to school in the morning and frequently talks about his teachers and friends. Luyanda is truly blossoming and making huge progress towards catching up with his hearing peers.

The Columbia Regional Program has been huge part of our lives. They have walked alongside us since the beginning- from Luyanda getting his first hearing aids and saying only 7 words at the age of 3 to the present. Our son enjoys the monthly play-dates for CRP families that they facilitate so the children can have a sense of community with other peers who look like them.

They have also provided us with monthly sign language nights where parents can learn American Sign Language to help them communicate with their children. This gives parents the chance to talk with other parents going through the same process. While the parents are learning ASL, they have child-care for the children with certified Deaf/Hard of Hearing specialists from CRP to teach them ASL as well.

I have no doubt Luyanda's huge strides would not have happened without the staff, teachers, and audiologists at CRP who have invested their specialized knowledge, time, and love into our son. And yet this is not just Luyanda's story. There have been many other families who I have talked to in the program who have benefited immensely from this tremendous program.

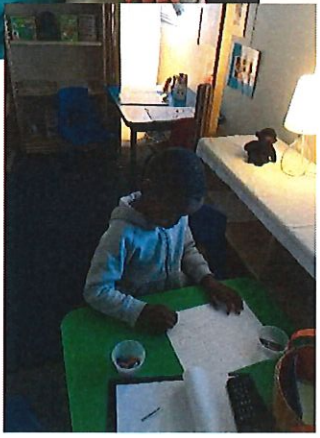
So why do I share all this? Because it breaks my heart to hear there is talk about not funding this very vital program for deaf and hard of hearing children in the State of Oregon. CRP serves hundreds of children in many counties. I am asking you for your help, and I am advocating for children like Luyanda who need specialized services for their success. The Columbia Regional Program is a much-needed and vital program that is worth every dollar spent. If CRP is not fully funded then the results could be devastating. Would you please consider helping to fully fund the Columbia Regional Program to ensure the deaf/hard of hearing children are not left behind?

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you for your time,

Tim, Hannah, Shaya & Luyanda Alexander
mrtimalexander@gmail.com
503-593-0772

Luyanda's first hearing aids at Columbia Regional Program.



Luyanda at Columbia Regional Preschool.

(Photo taken by teacher Shannon Sandri 🤖)

To Whom It May Concern:

Hello my name is Nichole Longoria. I'm a mother of two and both of my children were born with a hearing loss. The Columbia Regional Program has been an amazing help to my family for the past 11 years. I honestly don't know where we would be without these services. Being able to stay in contact with an Audiologist so easily for maintenance and repairs is a huge deal. Their team goes above and beyond to provide testing services, ear mold that are up to date and the correct size, hearing aid maintenance, and if there's ever an issue that they cannot resolve they are able to loan a pair of aids out while ours are out for repair. That's alone is huge, both of my children need to wear hearing aids daily or they are not able to hear properly or learn to the best of their abilities. We have tried to go to an Audiologist at Providence but they were unable to provide services like these.

My story goes back to February 2008 when my daughter was born. Adison did not pass her hearing tests in the hospital. The nurse brushed it off as if it was no big deal, probably not to worry us or give us scary news like that. I was a first time mother and didn't think about it again until I got a call from the hospital following up around June to ask if I had made it back in for retesting. I had forgotten all about it until that point and scheduled an appointment at Providence. At that appointment it was discovered that she did have a mild hearing loss. They recommended that I get in contact with CRP which I did and by September of that year Adison was in her first pair of loaner hearing aids waiting for her own pair to arrive. She received speech services weekly and biweekly until she was in kindergarten. She continues to get hearing checks one to two times a year and a representative stops by her school about once a month to check in on her and the FM system she uses in class to amplify her teachers voice. Without the FM system it would definitely make learning a little more difficult for her.

Liam was born January of 2012. This time around I was on it with testing. Of course the machine they use in the hospital was down at the time he was born but the following week we were able to get him in for testing. We found out that he had a hearing loss as well. Liam has a mild/ moderate hearing loss. Liam received hearing aids right away and speech services weekly but had a hard time communicating until he was able to start preschool at age 3. He started in a dual language program through CRP where they worked on speech and communicated with him verbally and using ASL. ASL changed everything for him. My frustrated little boy who just wanted us to understand what he was saying could finally get his point across. At our IEP meeting before kindergarten we had to decide whether he would go to our local public school with an aid to help him throughout the day or stay with the CRP in the dual language program. This was an easy decision he needed ASL to be able to communicate and with his peers using sign as well just felt like that would be the best environment for him to learn in. Preschool was a great start for him but everything changed when he started going to Creston Elementary for Kindergarten in Julie Becker's class. It was a much needed change for him, he was ready to learn more. By November, two months into Kindergarten, it was time for conferences when Julie had Liam read part of a book they had been working on. I could not believe how much progress he had made in that short amount of time. All I could do was cry happy tears of course. Julie is able to figure out the best approach for each child so they are able to learn at their best ability. Liam is in first grade now and doing amazing, he is able to go out to the mainstream classroom for math with a teacher aid to help with understanding the curriculum using ASL. Liam is thriving, so happy, and loves school.

Parenting is never easy but having children with any disability makes it that much harder, it is never easy seeing your children struggle. Columbia Regional Program has given my family the guidance and resources we need, for that I couldn't be more thankful. With their help, both of my children have the tools they need to be productive contributing members of society.

Sincerely,

Nichole Longoria

15 January 2019

Dear Legislator,

I am writing to express my gratitude and support for the work done by Columbia Regional Program and to urge you to continue to fully fund the Program. My daughter, who is in second grade in the West Linn-Wilsonville School District, is hard-of-hearing. Her hearing loss affects her educationally, and she receives services related to her Individualized Education Plan from Columbia Regional Program. These services include one-on-one education from a Teacher of the Deaf, audiological services from an Audiologist, specialized equipment including a classroom FM system to help her hear her teachers and classmates, and education on hearing loss and related student accommodations for her teachers. These services have benefitted my daughter greatly. She is succeeding at school and I am certain that without the services of Columbia Regional Program, my child would not be doing as well as she is now, either academically or socially.

Research shows clearly that investments in deaf and hard-of-hearing children more than pay off, economically, in the long term. These investments in our children may include early intervention for preschoolers, educational supports for school-age children, appropriate amplification with hearing aids or cochlear implants, and ASL interpreters for children who communicate with ASL. When children receive appropriate services, they are far more likely to become productive workers who provide for themselves and contribute to our communities. When children do not receive appropriate services, they are more likely to struggle financially and socially throughout their lives.

While providing appropriate services to deaf and hard-of-hearing children does make economic sense, it is also, simply put, the right thing to do. All children deserve the chance to meet their full potential. I urge you to continue to fully fund the good work of Columbia Regional Program in our public schools.

Please contact me if I may provide any additional information about our experiences with Columbia Regional Program.

Sincerely,

Claire

Claire McGrath, M.S, Ph.D.
West Linn, OR
Phone: 208-870-2837
E-mail: riverbio@gmail.com

Dear Mr. Legislator,

My name is Nicole. My son Francis was born on April 16, 2017. At the hospital he did not pass his hear test. They told me to come back in a month to have him do what they called an ABR test. I will never forget that day. It was a beautiful day in Portland and the sun was out. An hour in to his text the doctor told me we needed to come back and do another test because he did not pass. I remember feeling so lost and sad. I didn't know what hearing loss meant or what I needed to do next. I remember crying every day for a month. One day someone from early innervation called me and told me that they will set up a meeting to help me got through his. The team has become my family. They were so kind and sweet though out the whole process. I met Kerry who now has not only helped Francis but has helped me understand what it means to have children with hear loss. There is no way I would have gotten through all of this without their help. My son is doing so well now because of all the help and the resource early innervation has done for my family. They have changed my life and my son's life. You don't not know how much these group have done for family out there. They brought me back to life. It's so important that you continue to pervade them with anything that they need because they have pervaded me and so many families out there with so resource. Our community need them more than ever. Please help!!!!!!
If you have any question, please call me at 503-752-9279 or email me at nicolesath@gmail.com

Thank you

Nicole Nguyen

January 29, 2018

Dear Honorable Members of the Oregon Legislature,

I implore you to financially support the Columbia Regional Program in equal measure to the enormous amount of effort that the educators and para-educators in the program bring to the students. Every dollar spent, every resource dedicated, will be returned 10-fold in the future as these students, and our nine year old son James, achieve their potential through the staff's efforts.

In 2009, immediately after James was born and diagnosed as deaf, my wife and I were thrust into an unfamiliar world. We quickly tried learning about the special needs of our child. With the support of the CRP's Early Intervention services, we saw that we were not alone in dealing with this unexpected situation. The monthly in-house visits were excellent and even when James was in daycare near my office in Beaverton, the EI specialist traveled to us to see James in his environment outside of our home. In those early years the Columbia Regional Program's staff provided access to resources that we draw on to this day.

At two years of age James began to attend a private school, nationally regarded as a quality oral education school. The time at the private school was difficult for James as he did not fit the very specific model of deaf students they wanted to graduate. This "well-regarded" school for the deaf was fundamentally insufficient for the education of actually deaf children. James began to act out as he was forced to not use sign language. We unenrolled him and again turned to the Columbia Regional Program.

An amazing thing occurred when James entered kindergarten with the Columbia Regional Program at Creston Elementary: he began to truly thrive. He did not fit the private "deaf school", but at Creston he was finally able to grow and learn. His general language skills finally began to blossom and his social skills grew and grew.

The staff of CRP and Creston have worked what would best be described as a miracle. His classes use a dual-language approach (spoken English and American Sign Language) that is unique and amazingly effective. This could only be accomplished through the strong efforts of the educators to bring a comprehensive and thoughtful approach to the classroom.

The teachers and para-educators that guide James through the education of his young mind have helped propel him further than we had ever hoped. As a third-grader he is taking a mainstream mathematics class alongside typical-hearing students, at grade level. Considering the delays he experienced with access to language, it is remarkable that he has achieved this level of parity with his classmates.

Imagine you have a child who grew up being able to speak only a foreign language, say Japanese. Each day that child grows in their mastery of that language, but you as a parent have no background in Japanese. You cannot achieve a fully actualized relationship with your child. That is the reality of hearing parents of D/HoH children.

The staff at CRP recognized this fundamental obstacle for their students. They have started a night-class course in sign language for the hearing (and ESL) parents. They come back to the school and host dozens of parents and guardians who are often trying to bridge a gap of communication with their children that has grown wider each day.

It requires a deep and holistic view of their students' lives to perceive this gap. It requires passion and energy to take action to bridge this gap. The combination of the two have absolutely changed the lives of the students and saved the relationships of these families. I cannot thank them enough.

The flexibility and the dedication that is shown by the staff of CRP is far beyond what we could expect. And it is this support that has given our family hope and confidence that our child, many years from now, will be a full participant in our community and a capable citizen of the world.

Thank you for your time,

Ross Olson
Portland, Oregon
ross@rossolson.com
503-729-8569

We found out at birth Jionni was deaf.

The doctors told us about early intervention and we did at home visits until he started preschool with the CRP at Creston Elementary.

We had a lot of support from everyone involved. He was learning so much ASL at such a young age. Every 6 months or so he has audiology appointments at Wilcox, and they are so amazing and always so helpful in every step of the way with Jionni.

At one appointment we were recommended to try a Baja hearing aid and ever since his speech has improved dramatically! His teachers have mentioned a change and we see a huge change in him at home, talking and playing with his sisters, talking to us about how his day has been while we eat dinner, etc.

I feel having him at Creston in the CRP with a classroom setting has been so beneficial for him. Jionni is exposed to both ASL and spoken language, I feel he has more confidence trying to have a conversation, and just interacting at home or in public with other kids. I feel like ever since he started kindergarten at Creston he has just started to really talk way more and engage.

The CRP has been extremely helpful in cases where if Jionni misplaced an aid, CRP loans us one until we are able to find it again.

Over all I feel CRP has been so amazing at making sure my son gets the education and social skills needed to succeed in life.

Thank you.

January 14, 2019

Dear House and/or Senate Education Committee,

The purpose of this letter is to express our gratitude and appreciation for the Columbia Regional Program and their support of our son, Axel, and our entire family.

Our son, Axel, was diagnosed with Pompe Disease at three and half weeks old, and began the lifesaving enzyme replacement therapy at five and a half weeks old. Pompe is a genetic condition that impacts many aspects of a child's development. Axel has mild hearing loss and wears hearing aids. Muscle weakness is also a component of Pompe.

We therefore see Kerry Gilley from Columbia Regional Program for speech therapy and support with his use of hearing aids. She has been a tremendous gift to our family in many ways. Raising a child with hearing loss is new and unfamiliar to us, and she has provided us with information, ideas, and ways to maximize his success in speech and language development!

Kerry is warm, kind, and helpful. She comes to our home twice a month, as well as attending audiology appointments, and stopping by to drop off new molds or anything else we might need. She communicates well and often, and is always there when we need her.

Our son would not be experiencing the success he is without Columbia Regional Program. We cannot thank them enough for all they are doing for our family!

Should you ever need a family to give testimonial on the support and guidance of Kerry Gilley and the Columbia Regional Program team, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Colleen Sackos

To whom it may concern,

My name is Summer Steele and I'm writing to you to let you know that my son's success today has everything to do with the services and specialists at Columbia Regional. The world of hearing loss can be such an unknown for those who don't experience it firsthand because it's something that cannot be seen and has such variance. As a first-time parent to a kiddo with hearing loss, I found myself thinking along two different paths. One was tricking myself into thinking, "Oh, there's not really a problem," or "Maybe they don't really know and he'll outgrow it?" And the other was finding myself completely helpless and overwhelmed and feeling unable to do anything. As I journeyed toward coming to terms with the reality of my son's situation, vacillating between the two paths, Columbia Regional came into our lives and guided us through the necessary steps for giving our son the best start in life.

Columbia Regional steps in when it matters the most. It isn't something you have to reach out and coordinate, they literally come to your home and hold your hand and let you know it's going to be ok. Then they equip you with manageable tasks and information to work on with your kiddo. They accommodate you and your schedule and make it easy to open your life up to them.

Columbia Regional battles against time by being a constant force in your life. Time is a precious commodity to the very young, with so much important development happening at a rapid pace in those first few years. If that time is not spent actively supporting listening skills and the listening environment, that time is forever lost and a mountain of effort and obstacles lay ahead for the child with hearing loss. However, with constant check-ins, insightful advice and consistency of care, Columbia Regional effectively uses time so that the only outcome for a kiddo with hearing loss is success.

At one point, when my son was just under two years old, I had fantasies of moving back to the slower pace of where I grew up—a college town in Idaho. But once I realized that no such support services like Columbia Regional existed there, I quickly decided against the move. I knew that my husband and I alone, couldn't provide our son with what he needed. We needed professionals to guide us through the ever-evolving world of hearing loss.

We have utilized all aspects of Columbia Regional's services, from audiology, to workshops, to play dates, to outreach and connection with other families. And even to this day, we continue to utilize their services. Our son is now attending public school as a kindergartener and loving it. But without the professional wisdom, insight and philosophy of our hearing specialists at Columbia Regional, who knows if our son would be as successful as he is today? Columbia Regional believed in our family and in our son and because they believed in us, we believed in us. Our son's success is a testament to what Columbia Regional can do for families. Please continue to support its services and specialists.

Best,

Summer Steele
Multnomah County

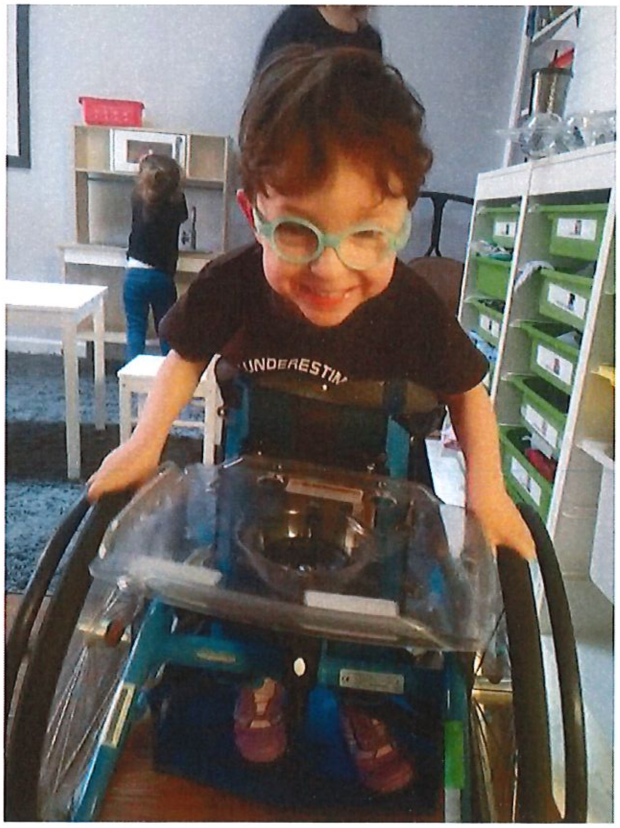
1/21/19

Hello Senator Thatcher -

I am writing in support for fully funding for Oregon's Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education programs, as I hear their funding from the State of Oregon may be in jeopardy.

I am a full time working mom of a 3 yr old with Cerebral Palsy. Lilia was born 10 weeks early, no one know why this happened, but it's not important now anyways. What is important is that she get every opportunity to have as normal of a childhood as other kiddos her age, and have opportunity to learn as grow.

Lilia spends her days in daycare, she sat in a regular Bumbo floor sitter, as daycare providers couldn't have their hands on her, supporting her, all the time. We love this daycare, and they love our daughter, yet the limitations were apparent. Kids would run around her, playing, sometimes getting on the ground with her. But it was apparent she wasn't really involved in play. If you are a parent, I know your heart sinks when you think of your child not being involved in play, just sitting and watching the other kiddos play, and not be involved.



Just this past month our NW Regional ECSE therapist was able to loan us a stander to use at daycare. I can't begin to tell how EXCITED I am for Lilia to be able to stand up at daycare!!! It's important for two main reasons…

1) Standing for young developing children is extremely important, as weight bearing is essential for establishing deep hip sockets (I know you've probably never thought about hip socket depth, but it's very important). Kids who've developed shallow hip sockets have the very common problem of have their hips dislocate continually, because the socket is too shallow. Alarming, thinking that your child could have this problem their whole life, all due to a lack of standing up.

2) Lilia is now on the same level as her fellow friends! Kiddos run up to her, they've had tea parties, build towers with blocks on the standers table, and talk to her! Lilia loves playing with her friends, and it couldn't be said any better that her smile can show you. This photo was just taken today at daycare. Her smile is huge, her heart and mine are full, all due to this piece of equipment that is on loan to us through NW Regional ESCE.

I hope that I can count on your continued support of EI/ESCE programs by voting to continue to fund these programs. I won't give you stat's on funding needs, you know that the need is HUGE. What I will leave you with is the understanding of what an amazing impact these programs have had on our family, on our hearts, and on Lilia's future!

Sincerely,

Lilia's mom – Kari Lorz

1/21/19

Hello Representative Neron -

I am writing in support for fully funding for Oregon's Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education programs, as I hear their funding from the State of Oregon may be in jeopardy.

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Sincerely,

Lilia's mom – Kari Lorz

SOUTH COAST
EDUCATION SERVICE DISTRICT

My son has been receiving ESD services for hearing impairment since he was 4 years old. Dale is one of our first points of contact when we have hearing concerns for either our son or his hearing aids. Anne Goodwin always went the extra mile to make sure that all of his systems were working prior to school starting. In our community that doesn't even offer audiological services for children, this is invaluable to have the ESD trouble shoot for us and help us advocate for our son's needs.

Cheryl Buehler
Resource Room Specialist
Kalmiopsis School
541-469-7417

As a speech pathologist with a daughter who receives both communication services and hearing services, I can attest to the value of the services provided by the ESD. Private services can be difficult for many families in this area to access due to scarcity and a lack of financial resources. A reduction in services will be very detrimental to many children in the area, many of whom are already underserved due to inadequate funding.

Hope this helps, and that it's not too late.

Beth