



PROGRAMS OF NW DISABILITY SUPPORT

January 29, 2021

Dear Honorable Members of the Oregon Legislature,

NW Disability Support (NWDSA/All Born In) is a best practices family driven organization that supports over 5000 local families and professionals in the region. We are dedicated to supporting families and individuals in building inclusive and healthy lives in the community and appreciate the opportunity to offer our support for Regional Programs.

Regional Programs serve children in early intervention, early childhood special education, school age through transition, and post high school services. Regional Programs serve and support our children who experience blindness, deafness, deaf blindness, orthopedic impairment, autism spectrum disorder, and traumatic brain injury. For all children and families, but especially those who live in smaller districts and those away from population centers, the economy of scale offered by Regional Programs often makes the difference for these children and their access to education opportunities in their local community and neighborhood school. The impact of COVID-19 and distance learning has been profound for these families and increased their dependence on the skills and resources of the Regional Programs.

**We respectfully request your support of SB 53.**

Supporting SB 53 will allow for a study, the first step toward articulating the resources needed for Regional Programs to serve all eligible children well. The study will provide a comprehensive report to the Legislature which provides a clear definition of the children served, develops a method for funding the program, and addresses issues necessary for the long-term success of regional services to eligible children and students across the state. Specifically, the study shall address:

1. How special education/regional programs are currently provided on a local, county or regional basis;
2. Changes in law or practice that would improve how special education/regional program services are provided on a local, county, or regional basis; and
3. Efficient and effective funding methods for providing special education/regional programs on a local, county or regional basis.

Districts, students and families rely on Regional Programs for their expertise, coaching, building capacity, and specialized equipment and technology. There is simply no alternative to Regional Program services in our state. They are the sole providers of these critical services for districts who hold the responsibility to serve all children.

Columbia Regional Program, serving our children with low incidence disabilities, has lost service supports over the past years due to state-level funding shortfalls, resulting

in less services provided to districts, and the impact is to our most vulnerable children and families.

We support efforts to restore critical services and supports to our students with low incidence disabilities and ensure districts are able to fulfill their obligation to educate every child.

While funding for EI/ECSE and K-12 special education (through the low-incidence, high-cost disability fund) have been increased with the Student Success Act, Regional Programs have experienced a 20% reduction in funding (when adjusted for inflation) since 2007-2009. In their 2021 report, the Quality Education Commission noted that "When adjusted for inflation, per student funding fell by more than 33 percent."

**We strongly support a request for an additional 10 million** statewide for the biennium to support the vital work needed by the regional programs.

Sincerely,



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