

January 24, 2023

To: Oregon Senate Education Committee

Re: SB 531 Summer and After-school Program Funding

Dear Chair Senator Michael Dembrow, Senators Suzanne Weber, Dick Anderson, Lew Fredrick, Sara Gelsner Blouin, Art Robinson, Rob Wagner

As President of Washington County Kids, a non-profit dedicated to increasing access to out of school time (OST-early childhood, after-school, and summer) programs, I urge you to support the passage of SB531 to provide funding for after-school and summer programs.

Even before the pandemic it was very difficult and costly to obtain quality after-school and summer care for children. The pandemic has exacerbated this problem, particularly for working women and BIPOC communities of color. We all want to have a thriving economy but that will simply not happen without more support for OST programs to allow parents and guardians to work knowing their children are safe and engaged in positive activities when they are not in school.

Research shows that OST programs promote academic success, higher graduation rates, positive behavior and safety, and good citizenship ([After School Alliance, 2014](#); [Vandell, et. al., 2020](#)). Quality child care and after-school programs have long term effects on graduation and eventual career success ([Parks, 2000](#)). By the time they reach 5th grade children who are economically disadvantaged who do not participate in summer programs average 3 years behind their middle-income peers who do participate ([Rand, 2015](#)). A meta-analysis of 213 OST programs found that participation significantly improved social and emotional skills, attitudes, behavior, and academic performance, resulting in an 11 percentile point gain in achievement ([Durlak and Weissberg, 2011](#)). In addition, most programs include some federally-subsidized nutrition which increases overall health and the ability to function in school.

These programs also impact the workforce. Women who utilize quality out of school time care have fewer absences and earn more. In addition, the families benefit by reduced costs that free up a significant part of the family's hard-earned income to pay for housing, food, and medical care ([McCluskey, 2018](#)).

Funds are inadequate for these programs or may not be sustainable. The State passed the SSA act which includes the possibility to fund after-school and summer programs but most districts have opted to use the funds for counselors and decreasing in-class sizes. Most counties do not allocate any of their funds to these programs. Some cities provide limited funding. Non-profit programs exist but they are not available in all geographic areas. Access is difficult for many children due to wait lists, fees, and/or transportation barriers. Some recreation programs exist but they usually require additional fees and they may be difficult to access due to the same barriers.

State funding has been allocated for summer programs in 2021 and 2022 and those programs have been very successful with many kids receiving care and enrichment that they would not otherwise have had access to. We are grateful to Senator Dembrow and other sponsors for making sure kids can get care during those summers. We urge you to support SB 531 to continue and expand that funding in 2023.

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President, Washington County Kids