



January 24, 2023

To: Senate Education

From: Our Children Oregon, The Children's Agenda

RE: Support of SB 531, Expand Afterschool and Summer Learning

Dear Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Weber, and Members of the Committee,

Our Children Oregon (OCO) is a statewide organization that advances equitable policies, data and research, and whole-child advocacy. The Children's Agenda, convened by OCO, brings together ~127 organizations statewide to create a holistic legislative agenda dedicated to improving the well-being of Oregon's children, youth, and families. Our collective created a 2023 legislative agenda that focuses on community-driven solutions to provide access and opportunities for all children and families.

Every child, youth, and teen in Oregon should have access to afterschool and summer learning opportunities. But nearly 221,000 children statewide are not participating due to current systemic barriers causing disproportionate disparities based on race, zip code, ability, language, identity, and income.¹ These children and youth lose valuable opportunities and experiences to learn, grow, and play during the school year and summer months. Alarming, research shows that children who do not attend afterschool and summer programs have a learning loss of up to 65% in academic performance.

We support SB 531 to ensure *all* youth have access to Afterschool and Summer Learning, especially those from our underserved communities including youths of color, Tribal/Indigenous youths, youths with disabilities, youths navigating poverty, and youths in rural communities:

- Funding to qualifying organizations that support, reduce, or remove barriers for Oregon's underserved children and youth while ensuring safe youth development opportunities in afterschool and in the summer. This includes working with and prioritizing community-based and culturally-specific organizations.
- Funding to continue Oregon's commitment to equity for youth communities most affected by systemic barriers and injustices.

¹ https://oregonask.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Access-_-Equity-Report-Final.pdf

To ensure equitable access for families, we must provide ongoing funding for new and current high-quality, culturally-responsive afterschool and summer programs. This will improve academic performance, social and emotional growth, and holistic experiences for our children and youth.

We thank you for your time and efforts to improve child well-being across the state. We urge your support of SB 531.

From the Our Children Oregon Team,

Ivy Major-McDowall, Policy and Advocacy Director

Jenifer Wagley, Executive Director

View the 2023 Children's Agenda at www.ourchildrenoregon.org/2023-childrens-agenda