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TO: Senate Education Committee

FROM: Amber Eaton on behalf of OAESD

RE: Summer Learning Testimony

Dear Chair Dembrow and Members of the Senate Education Committee:

Oregon Association of Education Services Districts (OAESD) is writing in support of Senate Bill 531 to support summer learning and enrichment opportunities for Oregon's most underserved youth. In early April 2022, the Oregon Legislature allocated \$50 million for community-based organizations to provide summer learning opportunities, administered through the Oregon Community Summer Grants (OCSG) Initiative by Oregon Association of Education Service Districts. This allocation allowed for significant positive impacts for Oregon youth, and funding to support these opportunities needs to continue under Senate Bill 531.

Access to engaging/enriching/necessary summer opportunities has been inequitable for youth who have long been underserved by our public education system: families or youths of color and tribal/Indigenous youths; families or youths impacted by disabilities; families or youths who are emerging bilinguals; families or youths navigating poverty, homelessness or foster care; families or youth in rural areas; and other local demographic groups who may be underserved. A priority of OCSG was to ensure that grant-funded programs increase community support for these underserved students. Continued focused funding for summer enrichment opportunities allows for access to programming and the cultivation of a sense of belonging, social and emotional programming and academic support, mentorship, and focus on family needs.

Last summer, with \$50 million of general funds allocated for the Community Summer Grant, OCSG funds provided 272, 568 kids with opportunities of participation in 6,133 individual summer program opportunities to youth throughout the state. These programs offered a variety of content including arts, social emotional learning, sports/recreation, outdoor or environment education, STEM/STEAM, mentoring, workforce development, literacy, and service learning.

Thanks to funding from Oregon Community Summer Grants, programming was created that most kids in our community would not otherwise have. Many grantees noted that youth displayed delays in social and emotional skills (often attributed to social isolation and pandemic restrictions), and that



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summer programs were especially successful in building these skills back up. Youth noted the best things about their summer camp experiences included trying new activities, making new friends, learning new skills that would help them in their futures, welcoming and supportive environments fostering belonging, and being able to participate in activities that were not available to them previously. It is critically important to support Oregon youth and families with access to meaningful, relevant summer opportunities. Grant funds made summer programs more accessible to families by removing barriers like transportation, cost, and language, and some programs also provided resources directly, such as family classes or enrichment activities. OCSG also alleviated the critical child care need for working families during the summer.

Every Oregon youth deserves access to safe, inclusive, and welcoming summer learning environments that will help them become a thriving adult. The connections throughout all regions of Oregon based on the expanded relationships among ESDs and CBOs, non-profits, and tribal communities have added a foundational layer for supporting Oregon's students and a network for collaboration with schools. OAESD and community based organizations stand ready to support the continuation of summer learning opportunities for youth. Providing consistent, sustainable funding and ensuring funding is available at minimum earlier in the year will reinforce the opportunity and practices for continuous improvement for programming. Please support Senate Bill 531 to get funds into our communities sooner to help ensure we can meet the needs of those continuing to struggle within our inequitable systems.

Sincerely,

Amber Eaton

Executive Director, OAESD