

Submitter: Melissa Shankle
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure: SB5506

Dear Senator Hansel and Senator Findley,

Thank you for the work that you do on the Ways and Means Committee to serve the children and families of Oregon. Please support SB 5506.

I work as a CARE Specialist in a Head Start Program in rural Eastern Oregon. After Covid 19 pandemic we are continuing to be a lifeline for the families we serve, however, we are now seeing families that are facing greater hardships. We are serving children with more behavioral difficulties and mental health issues.

With our current budget, it has become harder and harder to attract and retain qualified staff to meet the needs of the families we serve with comprehensive services, including mental health needs. With an increase in difficult behaviors, our staff is facing burnout and often we have no one qualified to replace them with. It is essential that we are able to raise salaries for our state to equal wages of kindergarten teachers across the state.

I want to continue to offer top quality services to our families, but in order to do that we need more money in the State's budget for early childhood education. The ability to recruit, hire and retain highly qualified individuals at a competitive wage is imperative to deal with these challenges that we currently face.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter,

Melissa Shankle
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