

Chair Steiner, Chair Sanchez, Members of the Committee –

My name is Eric Ellis, and I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you this evening. I am a volunteer with Adrian 2040, a non-profit organization serving the community of Adrian. In the last two years, we have partnered with the Oregon Community Foundation and the Oregon Association of ESDs, as well as our local school district, to provide summer programs for children in our town. We offered classes in sewing, woodworking, photography and cooking, as well as athletic camps in football, basketball, volleyball, swimming and frisbee golf. We served more than 150 children each year. My wife and I led the photography workshops and enjoyed sharing our passion with about 15 sixth-, seventh- and eighth-graders. It was fun to watch them begin to see themselves as people with something to say and express artistically. Both years our classes concluded by submitting the students' photography into the Malheur County Fair, and they were excited to see their work win ribbons in a wide range of contests.

Tonight I'm speaking in support of SB531. We understand from an April 18 letter from ODE Director Gill that \$50 million allocated in the Governor's budget for summer programming has not yet garnered the needed support for inclusion. I'm speaking tonight to encourage you to include that funding. Our primary spending was for equipment and transportation – getting kids into these programs in a rural area means running multiple school buses to pick them up. Of course, we hope for full funding, but if you can find only a portion of the requested amount, we'd probably be able to replicate most of last year's offerings – we'd have to prioritize transportation, buy less equipment, and reduce or eliminate the small stipends we were able to pay volunteers. If the funding were completely eliminated, the transportation costs would make most programs infeasible.

I know our story in Adrian is one which has been seen throughout the state – we all want the best for our children as they grow and learn. Offering them summer opportunities to learn and socialize, especially in rural areas where those are hard to come by, strengthens us in the future. I hope you'll look for ways to find funding for these programs, even at a reduced level – it makes a real difference. Thank you for your attention and consideration.