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January 27, 2025

Matt Serres, Policy Director  
Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities  
2475 SE Ladd Ave #231  
Portland, OR 97214

RE: Testimony to Senate Committee on Education for Senate Bill 868 (Neutral)

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To Chair Frederick, Vice-Chair Weber, and Members of the Committee:

The Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities (OCDD) works to create change so that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) can live full lives as valued members of their communities. Every child deserves access to a full and inclusive education. However, the gradual decline in funding for the Regional Inclusive Services (RIS) program since the 2009-11 biennium has had a disproportionately negative impact on students with IDD. A stable funding formula for RIS would increase supports for the children with lower incidence disabilities that it serves.

The RIS program, if funded appropriately, operates on a regional basis to allow more specialized staff. Those staff provide services related to the specific needs of those with disabilities that occur at a lower rate. Some intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) fall into that category of “low incidence” disabilities such as autism spectrum disorder, which accounts for the largest number of students for whom the RIS program provides supports.

The proposed bill directs Oregon Department of Education (ODE) to develop a funding formula for efficient and effective funding of RIS and requires ODE to report on the differences between the funding formula and actual amounts made available. Those reports will help to provide the data necessary to determine adequate funding levels. Current funding levels are not keeping pace with increases to the RIS-served student population. RIS also relies on discretionary funds instead of other more stable state funding streams.

A more stable funding formula could provide for adequate service levels, consider geographic cost variations, identify new funding sources, and meet the increase demand for RIS services. A biennial report to determine the adequate level of funding for each biennium moving forward would have a positive impact on the future availability of the RIS program to students with IDD.