

COURTNEY NERON
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
DISTRICT 26



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Testimony in Support of [HB 3053](#)

February 11, 2025

Chair Hudon, Vice Chair Wright, and Vice Chair Fragala and Members of the House Committee on Higher Education and Workforce Development,

I write in **support of HB 3053**, a bill to **ensure access to summer camp for some of Oregon's most marginalized children as we strategically expand the workforce to serve their needs.**

Children who rely on **Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)** face daily communication challenges that many of us haven't experienced — expressing thoughts, participating in conversations, and feeling fully included in social spaces. For these children, traditional summer camps often remain out of reach, not due to a lack of interest, but because the necessary support simply isn't available. HB 3053 changes that by funding "Ducks in AAction," a unique and visionary program at the University of Oregon that **provides both a transformative summer camp experience for AAC users and an immersive, hands-on training opportunity for future speech-language pathologists (SLPs).** This initiative ensures that children who communicate with AAC are not excluded from experiences that shape confidence, independence, and lifelong friendships.

Beyond the immediate benefits to children and their families, this bill also **tackles a critical gap in Oregon's workforce.** Many graduate-level SLP students enter the field without adequate AAC training, leaving them unprepared to serve children who need their expertise. This is particularly concerning in rural areas, where access to specialized services is already limited. By embedding clinical training into a real-world setting, this program builds a pipeline of professionals who are not only equipped with the technical skills to support AAC users but also develop a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of these children and their families.

This is a modest yet strategic investment. With just \$40,000, the state will strengthen our workforce, serve as a national model for integrating inclusive recreation with professional training, and change lives. This bill is about ensuring that no child in Oregon is left without a voice or access to summer learning opportunities, and that our **future Speech Language Pathologists have the workforce experience needed to serve all of our Oregon communities.**

I urge your support for HB 3053.

Sincerely,