



February 14, 2025

OCCYSHN
Oregon Center for Children and
Youth with Special Health Needs

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Dear Senator Gelser Blouin and Representative Nguyen,

We are writing to you on behalf of the Oregon Center for Children and Youth with Special Health Needs. As Oregon's public health agency committed to strengthening systems that serve children and youth with special health care needs, we want to express our strong support of SB 953 as it directly aligns with our mission to promote the well-being of all of Oregon's children and youth with special health care needs. We understand that the transition into kindergarten can be a stressful time for many families, but it can be even more so for children with a disability. The creation of this task force would help support children with disabilities and their families as we strive to identify, develop and implement best practices.

However, we believe that the task force would benefit from the inclusion of pediatric health specialist, such as a school nurse or pediatrician with expertise and experience caring for children with disabilities. This representative could help advocate for the unique concerns that families of children with special health care needs may have as they start kindergarten. They could add valuable insight into the physical, mental, and developmental needs of young children with disabilities and ensure that their unique healthcare needs are adequately addressed.

A pediatric health representative could provide guidance on:

- **Addressing potential health concerns:** A pediatric health expert could help identify areas where children and families will need additional supports with regards to health care needs when transitioning to a new school system. Their expertise and experience could also help integrate evidence-based best practices and identify emerging trends.
- **Coordinating with healthcare providers:** A pediatric health expert could help support effective communication and collaboration between the task force, schools, and healthcare providers, including a broad range of primary and specialty care providers.
- **Promoting healthy school environments:** A pediatric health expert could contribute to the development of best practices for transition that promote healthy school environments, which are essential for all children, especially those with disabilities.



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We want to again express our support of this important legislation to strengthen the transition to kindergarten. We urge you to consider this amendment to SB 953 to strengthen this critical task force's ability to develop comprehensive and effective best practices for children with disabilities transitioning to public school.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue. We will also be submitting this letter for public testimony.

Sincerely,

Karen Benson (she/her)
Health and Education Project Manager
Oregon Center for Children and Youth with Special Health Needs (OCCYSHN)

Benjamin Hoffman, M.D.
Director
Oregon Center for Children and Youth with Special Health Needs