



**COW CREEK BAND OF UMPQUA TRIBE OF INDIANS  
GOVERNMENT OFFICES**

2371 NE STEPHENS STREET, SUITE 100

ROSEBURG, OR 97470-1399

Phone: (541) 672-9405 Fax: (541) 673-0432

February 14, 2025

Dear Chair Hartman, Vice-Chair Nguyen, Vice-Chair Scharf, and House Early Childhood and Human Services Committee Members:

Thank you for holding the public hearing on HB 2815 -1. The Tribal Early Learning Plan and Fund is a critical next step for centering Tribal sovereignty in Oregon's early learning system. HB 2815-1 upholds Tribal sovereignty and self-determination by ensuring that the nine federally recognized Tribes in Oregon have the authority to design, implement, and oversee early learning programs that reflect the unique needs, cultures, and priorities in their communities. Early learning and care supports are vital infrastructure for Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians as it supports the development and education of our children and families. While we currently operate one early childhood education site—Yimisa' Preschool located in Myrtle Creek—the need across Douglas County is vast. In response to this need, the Tribe is exploring adding additional childcare by opening up a second facility. Funding for this facility is contingent upon the Tribal Early Learning Plan and Fund.

This legislation builds on the important work of those who came before us, recognizing the gaps in Oregon's approach to supporting child care and early learning for Tribal Nations. The passage of HB 2055 in 2021 was an important milestone to direct the Early Learning Division, now the Department of Early Learning and Care (DELIC), to engage in government-to-government consultation regarding reducing barriers for Tribes to access funding for early learning and child care.

As a member of the Tribal Advisory Committee, the Tribal Early Learning Plan we have proposed via DELIC centers Tribal sovereignty and self-determination to support language and culture revitalization, professional development, and increase access to services to meet Tribal early learning and child care goals. This bill recognizes that Tribes are in the best position to determine how early learning resources are allocated to support their children and families. By establishing the Tribal Early Learning Fund, HB 2815-1 affirms a government-to-government approach, where each Tribe has direct access to funding a decision-making power, rather than being subject to state-controlled programs that may not align with Tribal values or needs.

In 2023-2024, with the limited resources currently dedicated to Tribal early learning, Cow Creek promoted early childhood literacy. Due to geographic barriers, the Tribe utilized a book club for

young readers to make the greatest impact in the community. Through this program, 2-3 age-appropriate books were sent to 198 children from 161 families each month, which included infants. Additionally, a total of 430 children from 345 families received a Launchpad, which is a tablet that does not require internet connect featuring preloaded games that encourage the development of young readers.

Additionally, the Tribe's Yisima Preschool provides quality evidence-based early childhood programming to tribal parents and children, as well as non-tribal lower income families. Our services focus on parenting education, parent-child interactions, kindergarten transition, and tribal language preservation and revitalization activities in a geographical area facing high levels of poverty and lower levels of educational attainment.

The Tribal Early Learning Fund will allow Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians to expand on this critical work, increasing access to care for our children and families and supporting our language and culture revitalization. These investments in the earliest year have a demonstrated return of \$4-\$9.

As a member of the Tribal Advisory Committee representing Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians, I urge you to support HB 2815 -1 and fully fund the Tribal Early Learning Fund so that we may continue to recognize our sovereignty and serve the children and families in our community.

Investing in early learning through Tribal-led initiatives strengthens language revitalization, cultural preservation, and community-driven education, reinforcing the inherent rights of Tribes to shape the future of their youngest learners in ways that honor their traditions and governance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jennifer Reid".

Jennifer Reid, Education Director

Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians