



# COQUILLE INDIAN TRIBE

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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 the Coquille Indian Tribe as it supports the development and education of our children and families.

This legislation builds on the important work of those who came before us, recognizing the gaps in Oregon's approach to supporting childcare 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 childcare.

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 childcare 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.

With the limited resources currently dedicated to Tribal early learning, in the 2023-2024 year, Coquille used OTELA funding to strengthen and support our Little Feathers Program. The Little Feathers Program is an education program supporting early learning, cultural education, and family support services which provides wraparound care for tribal families with children ages 3-

5. The funding from DELC supported 20 children from 19 families, along with 7 educators and caregivers in the program.

The Tribal Early Learning Fund will allow the Coquille Indian Tribe 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.

Our team are members and active participants of the Tribal Advisory Committee representing the Coquille Indian Tribe, 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,

Tribal Government CEO