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On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee
On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5514

I have had two children go through head start, one is still in it, and it has been an amazing program for our family. Our kids loved it, the teachers are amazing and the skills they learned have helped them immensely in school and in daily life.

Funding is vital to having quality employees and education, plus being able to have more children attend.

Please provide them with the necessary money to fully fulfill the needs of their kids.

The Oregon Head Start Association is working to ensure that every eligible family is provided with an opportunity to enroll their child in a local Head Start program.

Their top priority is to stabilize funding for local head start programs. We are asking for \$387.843 million funding from the existing funding sources that support our programs, the General Fund and funding from the Student Success Act. This funding level would allow us to maintain existing services, and operate without significant budget cuts.

Head Start programs, established nearly 60 years ago by President Lyndon B. Johnson, have a long history and track record of success. With uncertainty at the federal level, state support for Head Start has never been so critical.

OPK is a state funded program that operates under the same guidelines as federal Head Start Programs. Head Start provides high quality, free pre-school for children ages 3-4. Programs support critical language, literacy, and emotional development, and are located in every county in Oregon.

Head Start provides nutrition support, health care support, and prioritizes working with families to help them stay engaged and involved in their child's education. Head Start's OPK programs provide children with a chance to begin public kindergarten well-adjusted and ready to learn.

Eligible children primarily come from families that earn less than 100 percent of federal poverty level, are currently experiencing homeless or foster care, or receive TANF, SSI or SNAP benefits. Early Head Start provides early learning and comprehensive child development along with family support services to low-income families with children from birth to 3 years of age.

Head Start puts children on the pathway to success.

Children are more likely to read by the 3rd grade, graduate from high school and

receive a post-secondary degree. Head Start programs prioritize children's health. Programs promote physical, dental, and mental health. They provide free daily meals and snacks to promote good nutrition and ensure children are healthy and ready to learn.

A key to Head Start programs' success is that Head Start emphasizes the role of parents as their child's first and most important teacher. Parents learn how best to support their child's educational development and are given opportunities to advance their own education and gain job training.

These programs really have been wonderful for our family. Our son who is now in kindergarten had some issues and was a very sensitive kid, head start helped him learn vital social skills as well as learn important skills for school. He is now doing amazing, doesn't need any more speech therapy and has much better emotional regulation and social skills all learned from amazing teachers at head start.

I appreciate the program so much. I currently have a child in early head start and I would be so disappointed if funding didn't come through and she couldn't continue when she is three and four.

Thank you,

Susan Garay