

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

To the Honorable Members of the Oregon State Legislature,

I am writing today on behalf of the Oregon Head Start Association to express our strong support for continued and stable funding for local Head Start programs across the state. As you know, Head Start programs are vital in providing high-quality, early childhood education to children ages 3 to 4, especially for families who face significant economic challenges. In this critical time, we are asking for \$387.843 million in funding from existing sources such as the General Fund and the Student Success Act to ensure these programs can continue their essential services without significant budget cuts.

Head Start, established nearly 60 years ago by President Lyndon B. Johnson, has a proven track record of success in helping children, especially those from low-income families, thrive academically and emotionally. The uncertainty at the federal level only makes state support for Head Start more critical now than ever before. This investment will help maintain the services that have made a measurable difference in the lives of thousands of children and families in Oregon.

It is important to note that the Oregon Pre-Kindergarten (OPK) program operates under the same guidelines as the federal Head Start programs. These programs not only provide children with a safe, nurturing environment to develop essential skills but also support critical areas such as language, literacy, emotional development, and health. They are available in every county in Oregon, ensuring that every eligible child has access to the resources they need to succeed in school and beyond.

Head Start programs also prioritize the role of parents as their child's first teacher, empowering them with the tools and knowledge to support their child's educational journey. In addition to educational support, Head Start offers comprehensive services that include nutrition, healthcare, and family engagement. These wraparound services ensure that children and families have the foundation needed for long-term success.

By investing in Head Start, we are investing in Oregon's future. The research shows that children who attend Head Start are more likely to read by the third grade, graduate from high school, and pursue post-secondary education. In addition, they are healthier, more prepared to succeed in school, and equipped with the skills they need to thrive in life. With eligible families coming from low-income backgrounds,

including those experiencing houselessness, foster care, or receiving public assistance, these programs help level the playing field and give every child an equal opportunity to succeed.

We urge the Oregon State Legislature to prioritize the funding of Head Start programs and ensure that every eligible child has access to the high-quality education and support they deserve. The requested funding of \$387.843 million will allow Head Start programs across Oregon to continue their critical work, providing our youngest learners with the tools and opportunities they need to succeed in school and life.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Anna Machado
Family Advocate