

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

I am pleased to share the remarkable progress of an exceptional child who has benefited from Head Start. Born during the pandemic, he exhibited shyness and hesitation in socializing due to limited exposure beyond his family. Additionally, he required speech therapy due to hearing impairments exacerbated by wearing a mask.

However, through Head Start and his Individualized Education Program (IEP), he has experienced significant growth. He has forged friendships and now attends speech therapy sessions thrice weekly. This progress has prepared him for success in kindergarten next year.

I am writing to seek your assistance in ensuring the continued funding of local Head Start programs. We are requesting \$387.843 million from the General Fund and Student Success Act to sustain these vital services. This funding would prevent substantial budgetary reductions and allow Head Start programs to offer their comprehensive range of services.

Head Start programs have a rich history spanning nearly six decades, having provided a solid foundation for countless children's development. However, we urgently need your support to ensure that every eligible family has the opportunity to enroll their child in a local Head Start program.

The Oregon Head Start Association (OPK) is a state-funded program that adheres to the same regulations as federal Head Start Programs. Head Start offers complimentary preschool services for children aged 3 to 4. These programs emphasize the development of essential skills such as reading, writing, and emotional intelligence. OPK programs are accessible across all counties in Oregon.

Head Start provides comprehensive support to families, including assistance with food, healthcare, and fostering parental involvement in their child's education. OPK programs equip children with the necessary skills to transition seamlessly into public kindergarten, ready for academic success.

Typically, eligible children come from families with annual incomes below 100% of the federal poverty level, are experiencing homelessness, are in foster care, or receive TANF, SSI, or SNAP benefits. Early Head Start supports low-income families with children from birth to 3 years of age, facilitating their learning and development.

Head Start empowers children to achieve their full potential.

Children enrolled in Head Start programs exhibit a significantly higher likelihood of achieving literacy proficiency by the third grade, graduating from high school, and pursuing higher education. Additionally, Head Start programs prioritize the well-being of children by providing comprehensive health services.

These programs encompass physical, dental, and mental health care, ensuring that children are well-nourished and equipped to learn effectively. Furthermore, Head Start programs offer free meals and snacks, contributing to the overall health and readiness of children for academic success.

The effectiveness of Head Start programs lies in their empowering approach, which involves placing parents at the forefront of their child's education. Through these programs, parents gain valuable knowledge and skills in teaching their children essential learning concepts and developing the necessary competencies for academic achievement. Additionally, parents have the opportunity to enhance their own education and career prospects.

We sincerely appreciate your time and consideration. Your support is greatly valued.

Best regards,
Teresa mccormack