

Submitter: Kayley Schmidt  
On Behalf Of: Head Start Programs  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee  
On Education  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5514

## Support Head Start: Invest in Our Children's Future

Head Start programs change lives, providing free, high-quality preschool and vital family services to Oregon's most vulnerable children. These programs, operating in every county, foster critical language, literacy, and emotional development, setting kids on a path to success in school and beyond.

The Oregon Head Start Association is committed to ensuring every eligible family has access to this life-changing program. However, without stable funding, these essential services face significant cuts. We are advocating for \$387.843 million from the General Fund and the Student Success Act to maintain existing services and continue delivering high-impact early education.

Established nearly 60 years ago, Head Start has a proven track record—children who participate are more likely to read by third grade, graduate high school, and pursue higher education. The program also prioritizes children's health, providing nutritional support, healthcare services, and mental health resources to ensure kids are ready to learn.

Head Start's success lies in its whole-family approach, empowering parents as their child's first and most important teacher. Parents gain tools to support their child's learning while also accessing education and job training opportunities for themselves.

With federal funding uncertain, state support has never been more critical. By investing in Head Start and OPK programs, we're not just funding early education—we're breaking cycles of poverty and building a stronger future for Oregon's children and families.