

Submitter: Aspen Nance
On Behalf Of: Alaska Warner
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee
On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5515

To whom it may concern,

My daughter was diagnosed with Autism last summer right before her second birthday. Because of our access to Early Intervention Services such as those at NW Regional ESD, I was able to start receiving help for my daughter's significant developmental delays with gross motor skills as well as speech delays a full 6 MONTHS before I was able to get her in front of a Neurologist to be formally diagnosed with ASD. To a child that young, 6 months of early intervention is life changing for them as well as their families.

It is terrifying as a parent to spend your days pouring over developmental charts and wondering, "Why is my child not hitting these milestones that seem to come so simply to other children?" Developmental delays in all forms are not covered in baby books, it is something that even the most well intentioned prepared parent is not ready for. When I initially reached out over concerns about my child's delays to my local Early Intervention Program I was met with understanding, care and prompt action. I finally felt like I was not alone and there was a path paved forward for my child.

I have had the privilege of working with Janet Terranova, my child's SLP since January 2024. Janet, and the entire NW Regional program has gone above and beyond for not only just my child and myself, but countless other children and families in the community, Janet and our local Early Intervention have guided us through my child's developmental journey as well as her subsequent ASD diagnosis and referral for additional therapies over the past 15 months.

Without widespread access to these services, many children and families will suffer whether or not they receive their services publicly or privately. The need and demand for these services will only continue to grow.

In closing, I urge you to consider these numbers on a spreadsheet as actual people, and actual children. These are your nieces, nephews, grandkids, friends that need this support to continue. Maintaining widespread access to Early Intervention Services is not only a net positive to the community, it is vital for the community to progress forward.