

Submitter: Kashmir Gonzalez  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee  
On Education  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5515

To the Oregon Representatives that we believe in to fight for us,

My name is Kashmir. My daughter Harley (3 yrs and 3 months) participates in NW Regional Education programs for children with Autism. She is non verbal and not interested in being left behind! Harley is a loving, funny, smart, beautiful child. She has been receiving services with early intervention for longer than a year and she recently moved up into early childhood development.

The first time her teacher (Conner) came to our home to meet Harley, she was not interested! She has a way of noticing you in the room but not engaging. In less than 1 hour she was sitting with him while he read her a book. I cried with my whole heart! This was the first time I had seen Harley engage with anyone, including myself! I had tried every day of her life to engage with her, and she was never interested! Conner taught me how to engage with Harley in a way that made her comfortable and now we play together! Do you know how it feels to have your child not want to play with you? For almost 2 years of their life? I do. And without NW Regional Education services and teacher Conner, I might still be struggling with the depression that comes with your child seemingly wanting nothing to do with you!

Harley can now recognize letters and numbers and can say 1 or 2 word phrases. She enjoys music and movies and playing with her older sister, KC. We have been able to receive at home support for Harley with teachers, speech therapy, occupational therapy, and socialization with other kids her age and her way of thinking! I myself am neuro divergent and having this team of incredible people support us in a way that supports our whole family and grows our children has changed our lives in the best way! I am forever grateful for them.

In December of 2024 Harley was moved to the group for 3-5yr olds. She was assigned a teacher she had worked with previously in occupational therapy. By Jan 2025 due to lack of budget, she was transferred and Harley has only had ONE visit since 2024! She was receiving visits every 2 weeks prior to Jan 2025. Most kids have school 5 days a week. 6-8 hours a day with their teacher. In a best case scenario Harley gets 2 hours a month with her teacher. Those 2 hours are life changing. Please fight for educational funding to support these programs! They are needed in order to get kids ready with dreams to go to school in the future or get jobs or be independent! Harley wants to speak! She works very hard at it and since our very first visit, the things we learned from her teachers are all things she does now, on her

own! Funding these kids now is an investment in the future! These intelligent children that have a way of understanding something we can't see are only going to be able to teach us, if we teach them first.

Thank you for your time.