

Hello Members of the Joint Subcommittee on Education,

I am writing as a parent of a visually impaired child in full support for Senate Bill 5515. My child has greatly benefitted from Regional Inclusive Services. To give some background: my daughter was diagnosed with a visual impairment, causing her to be permanently blind at 6 months old. I was very overwhelmed and had not planned to move just so my child could access her education and have the same opportunities as her peers. I have lived my whole life in rural Oregon and had planned to raise my family there as well. Regional Inclusive Services made me confident that my blind daughter would receive the help/tools/and access to education she needed without my family having to move.

Currently, my daughter has achieved great success all the way to her now Sophomore year in High School. She receives education on braille, technology for the blind, orientation and mobility training to navigate her environment, and now that she will be turning 17 this year, she is working on the skills she will need to join the work force. The benefits of fully funding Regional Inclusive Services has many layers and a positive ripple effect that is seen throughout the community as well as the economy. Through Regional Inclusive Services my daughter gets time to be educated one on one weekly, as well as with her peers. Learning braille has been part of her life and she receives instruction weekly thanks to Regional Inclusive Services. She has gained the confidence to join her High School's ASB, play in the school band, and soon look for employment.

As I have read, the current funding for Regional Inclusive Services has largely remained unchanged since 2009, when adjusted for inflation. I also know that more students are needing service throughout rural Oregon. I understand that services in the city are much more prevalent and available, but it is unreasonable to assume all families of disabled children must leave their communities. It is a true blessing that Regional Programs can support these students **where they are**. It is not an overstatement to say that my daughter's TVI (teacher of the visually impaired) has changed her life, changed my life, and changed the lives of her peers. I know that the current funding structure is unsustainable as more students need these services.

This bill is a critical step for students to succeed and continue to access their education. Please support Senate Bill 5515.

Thank you so much for taking the time to read this and your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Taylor Sheeran