

Dear Members of the Joint Education Subcommittee,

As a paraprofessional with over two decades of experience working in special education, I've had the privilege of witnessing the profound impact these programs have on children and their families. I've seen firsthand how early support can truly change a child's trajectory.

I'm writing to you today to express my concern regarding the funding challenges facing these vital programs. I understand the complexities of budget allocation, but I hope to convey the importance of prioritizing our youngest, and often most overlooked, learners.

Over the years, I've observed the following:

**Growing needs:** The demand for early intervention and special education services continues to rise. We are seeing more children who need our support, and the complexities of their needs are also increasing.

**Resource constraints:** While we are dedicated to providing the best possible care, we often face limitations due to funding constraints. This can lead to longer waitlists for families and challenges in securing necessary resources and qualified professionals.

**The importance of early support:** The early years are crucial for a child's development. Early intervention can make a significant difference in a child's ability to reach their full potential, reducing the need for more intensive services later on.

**Family impact:** These programs offer invaluable support to families, providing them with the tools and resources they need to navigate the challenges of raising a child with special needs.

My goal is not to be overly critical, but rather to highlight the importance of investing in these programs. Any increase in funding would have a direct positive impact on the lives of countless children and their families. By providing adequate resources, we can ensure that all children have the opportunity to thrive.

I understand that you have many important decisions to make, and I appreciate your consideration of this matter. Thank you for your commitment to serving our community.

Sincerely,

Melissa Nazal