

Submitter: Carlie Wiley-Wolter
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee
On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5515

Dear Co-Chairs and Members of the Joint Subcommittee on Education,

I am submitting this testimony as educator of 20+ years, an Itinerant Teacher of Students who are Blind or Visually Impaired with Southern Oregon Education Service District and an active member of the statewide Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI) Professional Learning Team (PLT). I am writing to urge you to fully fund Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education (EI/ECSE) and Regional Inclusive Services to ensure equitable access to education for students with disabilities in Oregon.

Our current funding does not meet the needs of the students we serve. My colleagues and I work tirelessly to provide specialized instruction, accommodations, essential support to students with visual impairments and support to school staff working with students with visual impairments. However, our caseloads are unmanageably large, and the time we have with each student is not sufficient to provide the level of instruction and support they require to be successful. This is especially dire in rural areas, where services are already stretched too thin.

Additionally, students with visual impairments require specialized equipment, assistive technology, and adapted materials to access their education. Unfortunately, due to insufficient funding, these resources are often delayed, inadequate, or entirely unavailable. Many students would also benefit greatly from one-on-one support, but funding limitations prevent this from being a reality.

To address these urgent needs, I urge the Legislature to:

Adequately fund special education for children under 5 (EI/ECSE) at \$432.8 million.

Increase the special education cap in the State School Fund formula from 11% to 15%.

Provide 100% reimbursement to school districts for high-cost disabilities.

Adequately fund Regional Inclusive Services at \$122.4 million.

These investments are critical to ensuring that children with disabilities receive the education and support they need to reach their full potential. Without them, we are failing our students, their families, and the educators who are dedicated to their success.

I respectfully urge you to prioritize funding for these essential services. Thank you for your time and your commitment to Oregon's children.

Sincerely,
Carlie Wiley-Wolter, M.Ed.
Itinerant Teacher of Blind and Visually Impaired