

To all who are listening today,

Thank you for taking the time to address a very important matter of accurately funding Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education services in Oregon. I spoke with many of you on February 26th, along with over 70 people who came to the capital to bring this attention to light, and I am hopeful that you heard what we had to say and will take the steps to provide adequate funding for our youngest and most vulnerable children in this state. I am a Speech-Language Pathologist working with 3-5 year old children, and as an employee of Northwest Regional ESD, I am coming to you to ask for the additional \$25,000 needed so that I can continue to provide essential services to my students and their families and preschools. Right now, the amount of children I serve is so high, that I cannot provide the standard of service that the Oregon Department of Education is asking me to do. We need funding to do this work and to do it well.

I am also coming to you as a parent of a child who receives special education services at his preschool. My child is turning 5 and will head to kindergarten, and has been receiving speech therapy services since he was 2 years old. Without this support, my anxious mama heart would be overloaded with worry and doubt about how my child will do in elementary school. How will he graduate high school if he cannot speak? How will he get a job and enter the working world with confidence? These worries have been taken on by two very special Speech-Language Pathologists with Northwest Regional and they have come alongside my family and empowered us to help our son every step of the way. I come to you as the parent who has seen my son's service time lessen over the years, because there are too many children to serve and not enough staff due to budget cuts.

Please, take the time to listen and read all of the testimonies. Please look at the hands with comments from families, children, and teachers...and ask yourself if you are doing everything you can to take care of our children. Do not forget about the babies that you are saying "no" to if you do not give the additional \$25,000 needed for our program.

I appreciate the time you are taking to make these decisions, and I trust Oregon will do the right thing by myself, as an employee and also as a parent.