



High Desert Education Service District
March 18, 2025

Subject: Urgent Need for Increased Funding for Regional Inclusive Services/Special Programs

Dear Joint Subcommittee on Education,

I am writing to urge your strong support for increased funding for Regional Inclusive Services (RIS) in the upcoming budget. As the Executive Director of Special Programs at the High Desert Education Service District (HDES), I oversee the Regional Inclusive Services (RIS) program and collaborate with school districts across Central Oregon to deliver essential services to students with disabilities. However, as many of these districts face significant budget reductions, the ability to provide Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to our most vulnerable students is increasingly at risk.

RIS is vital in ensuring that students with disabilities receive the specialized support necessary for their academic and social success. These services offer expert consultation, professional development, assistive technology, behavioral and mental health support, and many other resources critical to fostering an inclusive educational environment. However, as districts and ESDs are forced to make difficult cuts, they are less able to meet the rising demand for special education services. Without additional funding, students with disabilities will face significant obstacles to receiving the education they are legally and ethically entitled to.

The financial constraints on school districts have made them increasingly reliant on RIS to address critical gaps in services. Without increased state investment, our capacity to provide the comprehensive, specialized support that students with disabilities need will be severely diminished. Prioritizing funding for RIS will ensure that every student—regardless of their abilities—has the opportunity to succeed in the classroom and beyond.

I greatly appreciate your leadership and commitment to ensuring that all students receive a high-quality education. Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration. I look forward to your support in ensuring that Oregon continues to uphold its commitment to serving all students, including those with disabilities.

Sincerely,

Jihan Nelson

Executive Director of Special Programs