

Submitter: Jennifer Crumley-Rarrick
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee
On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5515

Dear Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education,

My name is Jennifer Crumley-Rarrick, and I am a Teacher of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) with the Southern Oregon ESD. I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 5515, which will provide vital funding for Regional Inclusive Services (RIS), the lifeline of our DHH program.

My connection to this program is deeply personal. I am a product of the very services that SB 5515 aims to support. My educational journey began in a state where the needs of Deaf and Hard of Hearing children were not understood. I started my K-12 education without access to a Teacher of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, relying instead on a special education teacher with no specialized training or experience in DHH education. My parents have told me countless times about the day my school informed them, during an IEP meeting, that my future was limited, that I would be "lucky to be a blue-collar worker," and nothing more. This devastating prediction, which they recall with heartbreak, reflected a system that failed to recognize my potential.

Everything changed when my family moved to Oregon and I entered the Southern Oregon ESD Program for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. For the first time, I had a Teacher of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing who understood my experiences and challenges. I was immersed in a community of DHH peers who shared my commonalities. I was taught that despite being Deaf, I could achieve anything I set my mind to, be whoever I wanted to be, dream whatever dream I wanted to dream.

This program provided the foundation for my success. I went on to graduate from Southern Oregon University with a Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education and later earned a Master of Science Degree in Deaf and Hard of Hearing Education from Western Oregon University. I stand before you as living proof of what these programs, supported by vital funding like that provided through SB 5515, can achieve.

The Regional Inclusive Services (RIS) framework is essential for delivering specialized support to students with unique needs, including those who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing. At Southern Oregon ESD, the RIS funding provided through programs like the one addressed in SB 5515 is the backbone of our DHH program. It enables us to provide critical services such as specialized instruction in language and

communication, audiological support, interpreter services, assistive technology, and counseling and social-emotional support.

Without stable funding through SB 5515, our DHH program would face significant limitations. We would struggle to provide the comprehensive support our students need, potentially leading to:

- * Reduced access to specialized services.
- * Decreased availability of qualified professionals.
- * Compromised quality of educational resources.
- * Increased difficulty in meeting the diverse needs of our students.

The impact of these limitations would be profound, hindering our ability to provide the transformative education that Deaf and Hard of Hearing students deserve.

I urge you to support Senate Bill 5515 and invest in the future of our students.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Crumley-Rarrick