

Submitter: Jill Hudanish  
On Behalf Of: NWRESA Early Intervention program  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee  
On Education  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5515

To: The Joint Subcommittee on Education  
Re: SB 5515

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

I am a Speech Language Pathologist and have been working in Early Intervention for 25 years, after working in hospitals and private clinics for 5 years. I can honestly say working with infants, toddlers and their families in home-based Early Intervention programs in Northern Virginia and Oregon has been the most meaningful and rewarding work I could ever imagine. I have sat with parents in their living rooms as they've grieved a devastating diagnosis and celebrated with parents and caregivers when their children achieve developmental goals and "graduate" from services. I have helped families access resources to assist with housing, food and clothing, as well as accessing storytimes at the library and park playdates. I have a Master's Degree in Speech Language Pathology, but Early Intervention is about more than therapy, it is about supporting families when they are at their most vulnerable--with their new babies and very young children. The work we do is critical to supporting child development and kindergarten readiness, and also to supporting parents as they develop confidence and skills in parenting, advocacy and building healthy relationships with their children.

It has been dismaying to see how discussions about education in Oregon almost consistently omit early childhood education services for children ages birth to five years. These programs are part of the Department of Education, but get little recognition and advocacy from our legislators. Our work is deeply meaningful and pays dividends when children go through Early Intervention (EI: 0-3 years) and Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE: 3-5 years) and no longer require Special Education services in Kindergarten. And those children who do continue to need support in Kindergarten are so much more prepared for school because they have had support in the most formative years of their lives. I sincerely hope the Oregon Legislature will keep this in mind as they vote on fully funding EI/ECSE and Inclusive Services and ensuring those funds are there consistently and reliably for the foreseeable future. Investing in young children is one of the best investments we can make in our future and theirs. It is the responsible thing to do. It is the RIGHT thing to do.

Thank you for taking the time to read my statement and for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
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