

March, 2025

Dear Co-Chairs Ruiz and Sollman and Members of the Education Ways and Means Subcommittee,

We are the Co-directors of Early Childhood CARES – Lane County’s early intervention and early program since 1992. We have provided information about what we do and also data on how we are doing with the current level of funding. And we attached letters from parents who currently are receiving EI/ECSE in Lane County services from Early Childhood CARES.

**We urge you to fund EI/ECSE programs with an additional \$24 million for the 2025-2027 biennium to be able to maintain our current service levels. This is a total of \$432.8 million.**

And additional funds would allow us to come closer to meeting the adequate service level needs of children. The funding for EI/ECSE programs is in ODE’s Grant-in-Aide budget. **SB 5515**

---

**Early Childhood CARES** is the early intervention and early childhood special education (EI/ECSE) program for all children in Lane County. We provide specialized services and supports to all birth to school age children who have developmental delays and/or disabilities.

- EI/ECSE services are mandated under federal (IDEA) and state laws.
- No wait lists are permitted, and services must be provided within a required timeline.
- All services and supports are free to eligible children.
- Each eligible child has an IFSP (Individualized Family Services Plan) to meet their needs.

**Children are eligible** for services under a variety of educational eligibilities such as: Speech or Language Impairment, Developmental Delay, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Orthopedic Impairment, Deaf or Hard of Hearing, Visual Impairment, Other Health Impairment, Emotional Behavior Disability, Traumatic Brain Injury or Deafblindness.

**Services are provided** through home visits, parent-toddler groups, supports in community-based preschools, specialized preschool classrooms, and services in the areas of speech/language, motor, behavior, and autism. Children also receive developmental screenings and evaluations. Parents receive individual education and supports by means of home visits, consultation, connection to resources, a monthly newsletter, and trainings on topics of common interest.

**Staff are highly qualified professionals** including speech and language pathologists, occupational and physical therapists, EI/ECSE specialists (teachers and home visitors), nurses, school psychologists and educational assistants.

**Early Childhood CARES regularly collaborates** with all 16 Lane County school districts and all local early childhood programs and agencies to more effectively serve children and families in Lane County-- expanding programs, identifying needs and gaps and eliminating any duplication. Early

Childhood CARES leadership serves on many cross-sector state and local boards, advisory committees, and leadership teams to ensure collaboration and alignment.

**Early Childhood CARES annually serves over 1700 children** throughout Lane County in all 16 school districts. Over 400 children are thoughtfully transitioned from Early Childhood CARES into kindergarten, **prepared for school.**

**Average annual increase in children** served year to year has been 3-5% pre pandemic and 10-13% post pandemic. We anticipate the growth rate returning to 5%.

**Funding has not kept pace with the growth and needs.**

EI/ECSE services are funded based on a funding formula developed in 2009 and updated in 2011. The formula uses caseload projections and projected costs of providing adequate service levels for children who have mild, moderate and severe needs. Below is a table showing the percentage of children in Lane County who received adequate service levels in each category.

<b>Early Intervention (EI) birth – 2 years</b>	<b>% EI children receiving Adequate Service levels 2023</b>	<b>% EI children receiving Adequate Service levels 2024</b>
<b>Eligible infants and toddlers</b>	59.5%	51.4%

  

<b>Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) 3-5 years</b>	<b>% ECSE children receiving Adequate Service levels 2023</b>	<b>% ECSE children receiving Adequate Service levels 2024</b>
<b>Low</b>	95.6%	98%
<b>Moderate</b>	65%	75.3%
<b>High</b>	16.5%	17.5%

*Note: Lane County’s adequate service level data is similar to all EI/ECSE programs across Oregon.*

**We urge you to fund EI/ECSE programs with an additional \$24 million for the 2025-2027 biennium to be able to maintain our current service levels. This is a total of \$432.8 million.** And additional funds would allow us to come closer to meeting the adequate service level needs of children. The funding for EI/ECSE programs is in ODE’s Grant-in-Aide budget. **SB 5515**

**Thank you for your time and attention to this important program.**

**If you have any questions or want additional information contact:**

**Kim Giansante and Heather Brey- Co-directors**

**[kimgians@uoregon.edu](mailto:kimgians@uoregon.edu) and [hbrey@uoregon.edu](mailto:hbrey@uoregon.edu)**

### Family Letters Below:

My son James is now 4.5 years old. After his first birthday my husband and I started noticing differences from how our older two children had matured. He was not speaking and his manner of play was very unique. Going into his 18 month appointment with his pediatrician we were already preparing ourselves for the possibility of an autism diagnosis. Sure enough at that appointment we were told he likely has autism and were handed a stack of papers about services we should pursue and given a pat on the head. While the news was not totally unexpected it was very shocking and in some ways devastating. We then **began our journey with Early Childhood CARES not knowing what to really expect.**

**What we found was a group of people who loved children, who treated them with respect and kindness.** Who taught us parents that kids with neurodivergence are just normal kids who see the world a little differently. **They worked with us every step of the way** to obtain state and country resources that were desperately needed. They worked with our schedule to find a program that fit for James.

They cheered James on when he started making amazing strides with his therapy. To this day we text some of his prior teachers who have no obligation to him anymore but simply want to stay involved because they care so much about James. Today James is a happy, communicative little boy. He is preparing to start kindergarten at a standard school. He is saying "I love you" and "thank you" and doing things we didn't know would be possible. **To say that he wouldn't have achieved these landmarks without Early Childhood CARES is an understatement.** Our family owes them so, so much for all they have done. **I can't imagine where he would be without the support of Early Childhood CARES.**

Please, please, please protect Early Childhood CARES and the amazing care they provide to hundreds of families across Oregon. They are doing the work of angels and **without them so many families would face an insurmountable struggle alone.**

Sarah L.  
97408

Our family has a long history with Early Childhood Cares, going back to 2013 when our **son with Down syndrome** was born. Later, we became **foster parents for the state of Oregon** and we **welcomed many babies into our home who experienced a variety of developmental delays**. We've worked with EC Cares for about 10 children over 12 years, but this story focuses on one particular child, who I will call Tot for privacy.

Tot came to us in the middle of the pandemic. He was born very early and spent 8 months in the hospital. He was discharged with a ventilator, tracheostomy, central line, and feeding tube. When he arrived in our home, he couldn't lift his head. He was interested in toys, but couldn't reach out to grab them. Doctors told us that he might never walk or run or play like other kids. Just 10 days after Tot came to our home, we had his first early intervention home visit from EC Cares.

Tot spent most of his time on a blanket, watching our other kids play. Within a week, he was lifting his head. With the support of an EC Cares occupational therapist, he was soon sitting up while propped with pillows. An EC Cares physical therapist came often to work with Tot, and before long he was rolling back and forth. In just a few weeks, he'd made more progress than he had in months in the hospital. Speech helped us with feeding issues and our service coordinator was invaluablely supportive for everything.

Tot made progress no one anticipated. Within a few months, Tot crawled. Just 8 months after coming home, he was WALKING! **His team of EC Cares therapists was with us every step. They supported my husband and me when we had concerns, they celebrated the milestones, and they cheered him on to greater and greater successes.**

Today, Tot is nearly 5 years old. He is supported by those same EC Cares therapists in his school. Tot has overcome so much over the past 4 years. He still has a tracheostomy and a feeding tube, but all of the other equipment is gone. Tot runs and plays mostly like all the other kids. Most of his EC Cares therapists have been with him the entire 4 years, and we still celebrate his successes together. They've seen us through many hospital admissions, multiple cold & flu seasons, and 2 years of preschool. At our final IFSP meeting, there were some tears as we talked about how far this tiny, sick baby had come.

Having this team support us for 4 years has been incredible. **I don't think we'd be where we're at without them.** EC Cares isn't just some advice about development, they're a **lifeline for parents who have kids with developmental delays**. And having the support in our home was even more valuable. Those early months were so fraught with worry, between how very fragile he was and the ongoing pandemic, **having support come to us was critical**. We never could have taken him out to therapy offices, he was just too vulnerable.

Thank you to everyone at EC Cares for helping our boy THRIVE.

Sincerely,  
Heather & Shannon Hicks  
resource parents  
97478

Dear Elected Officials,

I am writing to express my heartfelt support for the Early Childhood Care Program in Oregon, which has made an **incredible difference in my son James's life**. James, who is autistic, has been enrolled in this program, and the progress he has made in a relatively short time has been nothing short of remarkable.

Before enrolling in the program, James faced significant challenges with communication, social interaction, and other developmental milestones. However, through the Early Childhood Care Program, he has shown tremendous improvement. **The support, structure, and individualized care he receives have allowed him to thrive and build essential skills that will set the foundation for his future success.**

The program is not only a resource for my son but also provides essential support to families like mine. It **ensures that children with developmental needs can receive the early intervention they need to reach their full potential, fostering positive long-term outcomes for them and their communities.**

**I urge you to continue your support for this critical program and advocate for its sustained funding and expansion.** The Early Childhood Care Program is instrumental in helping children with autism and other developmental challenges develop the skills they need to succeed, and it is **vital that it remains accessible to all families who need it.**

Thank you for your time and consideration. **I appreciate your dedication to the well-being of our state's children and families, and I hope you will continue to champion programs that make such a significant difference in their lives.**

Sincerely,  
Kyle Liljeberg  
97408

To Whom It May Concern,

Our **beloved great-grandson**, Kenny Nunez, turned four last month. While he loved his party, treats, friends, family, cake and decorations, Kenny didn't understand it was his fourth birthday as he is **on the autism spectrum**.

Kenny is a beautiful, kind, sweet, loving child and he is mostly non-verbal. However, just today, Kenny said three spontaneous sentences after his shower: "I'm cold, I'm wet and I want momma". Hooray!

This **success results from the dedicated, specific, consistent speech therapy he has received** since September 2024 from Betsy, EC Cares speech therapist. Betsy has also helped Kenny's family to learn and apply these therapies at home.

In January, Betsy, Kenny's ECCares classroom teacher, Kenny's mother, grandmother and I all participated in an in depth telephone progress conference. Betsy's input was professional, helpful, understanding and greatly increased our understanding of helping Kenny learn and grow.

Last night, on "Survivor", a young woman told her story: she is on the spectrum and, when she was a young child, her family was told she would never speak. And, yet here she was speaking! I bet there was a speech therapist working with her.

Thank goodness for Betsy and her colleagues helping our sweet wonderful children.

- Susan Connolly, 97405



Kenny's grandmother working with him on his words.

**I am a single mother of 4 children, all of whom have special needs, specifically autism. Without having support** from EC Cares and DD services, **I do not know where I'd be.** Each of my children

have a PSW that can take them out in the community to learn how to behave appropriately. It takes extra one on one for children with autism to acclimate to new environments and being alone with all 4 children will not give me the opportunity to work on those skills. EC Cares has **helped my children grow in so many ways, specifically with speech and social skills. My children are able to communicate and play with like minded children, and grow into wonderful members of our community.**

- Danyale Elam  
97404

Dear Oregon legislators,

My family's experience with Early Childhood Cares has been **invaluable**, and I am eager to share how it **positively impacted my child's development**. One of the most significant benefits was the **provision of early intervention and speech therapy services directly within my child's daycare setting**. This integration allowed for support within daily routines and supported everyone in being on the same page. Our dedicated providers acted as a vital bridge, connecting services and support between daycare and home.

**Thanks to the services we have received through Early Childhood Cares, my child has made huge gains and is well prepared to start kindergarten in the fall.** The program has been far more accessible than attempting to navigate the complexities of private therapy, which have tremendous waitlists and limited scheduling options within Lane County. **The ease of access, combined with the comprehensive and integrated approach, made a significant difference in our ability to provide our child with the necessary support.**

In addition to my personal experience as a parent, I have also had the privilege of working for Early Childhood Cares as a speech-language pathologist since 2017. This perspective has allowed me to **witness firsthand the profound impact of early intervention on children, parents, and educators throughout our community**. These services are not just beneficial; they are absolutely **critical for fostering healthy development and building strong foundations for future learning**. I **wholeheartedly advocate for the continued funding and expansion of early intervention programs**, ensuring that we can continue to provide these critical services.

Sincerely,  
Michelle Wright  
97405



My name is Sandra Bazan. I'm writing this to express my gratitude to Early Childhood Cares. **The services they have provided my children have been extraordinary.**

**My son Emilio now 8 years old was diagnosed with autism when he was 2 years old.** At that time I had no idea what as autism was and the impact it brought not only to my son but my family. I was contacted by Florien who worked at EC Cares. She **not only supported my son with early interventions services but went above in beyond with local resources to support my son.** Emilio is non-verbal and needed all the services that were available .

In 2020, I had **my Son Axel. At the age of 2 he spoke very few words.** I was concerned he had a speech delay or was also, autistic which turned out to not be the case. However, I contacted EC Cares to begin inventions services. **Axel is now 4 years old and thriving he speaks English and Spanish and knows his letters and counts.** Axel receives services from Chris at his preschool. Axel looks forward to seeing Chris and is eager to work with him on his goals. He also, receives speech services with Maria who he also enjoys seeing.

My family and I are truly grateful for EC cares and the services they provided to our family. **It is crucial that other families continue to receive support.** There is children needing these interventions and services. **As a mother of a non verbal son. I truly understand the impact that not having these types of services would have. It would affect many families already struggling to find services to support their children and their future.**

Sincerely,

Sandra Bazan  
97477

To whom it may concern,

My name is Nova Nunez, and I've **dedicated my life to the childcare industry, driven by a passion to nurture and empower the next generation.** As a devoted advocate for childhood development, my ultimate aspiration has always been to become an extraordinary mother and contribute positively to my community.

Although I've had extensive experience caring for children, I had yet to venture into the realm of special needs care. So, **when my son's doctor discovered my son's autism diagnosis it initially left me feeling apprehensive and uncertain. However, the incredible support network we've gained from the EC Cares preschool at Kelly middle school has empowered me with confidence and readiness to tackle future challenges.**

The teachers and his speech therapist are exceptional individuals who genuinely care about our children's well-being. **Without their dedication and the program my son is in, I'm uncertain where we'd be today. He's making remarkable progress every week, and I'm thrilled to witness the profound impact this program will have on his life.**

- Nova Nunez  
97405

**Due to the ECCARES program and excellent staff my son, Ezra, is better prepared to start his academic journey.** Ezra, who is four years old, is attending Preschool as part of EC CARES. When he was two years old our pediatrician said he is exhibiting signs of autism, and we should get a diagnosis. We had to wait over a year to get an appointment and the proper autism diagnosis, during that wait we were able to get an evaluation by EC CARES and enroll him in preschool.

**ECCARES has helped in many ways, not only academically, but also socially.** When I take him to the park, because he's non-verbal around strangers his peers either don't interact with him or have negative interactions. ECCARES provides that safe space where he can learn how to behave around his peers and in a classroom environment. He has also begun speaking a few words and understands many other words. His speech therapist let us know he's likely to have Gestalt language processing (GLP) so we have taken a different tactic to help him with his speech and grow his vocabulary. **The amazing teachers at ECCARES have taught him so many things that we, his parents, wouldn't even think to teach him because we aren't trained professionals.**

**His academic journey will be difficult, but with the help ECCARES has provided he will be prepared for kindergarten** in ways we couldn't do on our own. As you know **education is a building event, and it becomes increasingly difficult to reach the next step if you're not prepared for the step you're on.** ECCARES has laid a great foundation for his journey so he may be able to build on it and **prepare him for his happy and productive adult life.**

- Victor Van Horn  
97478

To Whom it May Concern,

My family is writing to you regarding the importance of retaining and expanding the services offered through Early Childhood Cares (ECcares) for children experiencing developmental delays or living with disabilities. **These services offer access to resources and trained professionals that are irreplaceable.** Two of our children- 10 years apart- have both blossomed and made enormous progress through utilizing the ECcares program.

Our older son experienced many challenges with sensory processing. He needed assistance with improving both his fine motor and gross motor skills. It was difficult for him to follow directions and understand how to participate in classroom activities-especially with his peers. The ECcares **teachers that worked with our son gave us immense insight and invaluable advice** on strategies to help him develop further in these areas. With their preschool intervention, he was able to assimilate into a typical gen-ed classroom with his peers; this would not have been possible without their support.

We are a blended family now- with three children. At the time, I was a single parent in a one income household. It was a financially difficult time and without access to the free services ECcares offers, I did not have the resources to pay for private preschool to help him develop these necessary skills. He would have entered public kindergarten with his peers, who likely attended preschool and were much further developed socially and academically.

I'm not sure if you've stepped into a Kindergarten classroom lately, but I'm sure we can all recognize that class sizes are problematic, there aren't enough aides to help the teachers, and the teachers spend more time working on behavioral skills- like listening and following directions- than actually teaching the material. Without ECcares intervention, I can't imagine how much of a disruption our son (and other children of similar abilities) may have been to his classmates- ultimately impacting all of their educations. Instead, he was able to attain these critical skills by being given the opportunity to work with these valuable teachers through ECcares. **Today, he is a high achieving 7th grader with a 4.0 GPA and is very active in sports and social clubs. We are very grateful for the support we received from ECcares.**

Our youngest child is currently receiving services through ECcares. He is 3 1/2, autistic, and has some developmental delays. His ECcares preschool operates 4 days/week for 3 hours/day. When he first started school, he was considered non-verbal. Although he goes to speech and occupational therapy, the time he spends with his teachers and peers at school has been significantly more helpful! He is talking a lot now at school and home, he is making much more eye contact, he is also much more curious and social. He is not very receptive to therapy and doesn't enjoy going. That being said, he absolutely adores his teachers and loves going to his school.

**I cannot even articulate to you how helpful ECcares has been** in expanding our youngest child's skills- particularly social and language. **These teachers put their life work into helping our children. They are passionate about what they do and they work hard! They become a second family and a safe space for these children to grow and learn without judgment.**

It is absolutely appalling that parents/educators/members of the community are having to advocate for such a strong pillar in our community in fear that they may lose funding. They are the number one resource recommended by local pediatricians, therapy offices, schools and other parents. Whether or not you have children, I think we can agree on the importance of living in an educated society. **EVERY child has a right to an education-regardless of their abilities. Some children need more help than others.** If you cut this irreplaceable resource for our community, not only are you saying that these children don't deserve the same opportunities by neglecting their needs- but you are streamlining them into a gen-ed system that was never set up to manage their challenges. You will absolutely end up with dysregulated and disruptive children whose needs aren't being met- while simultaneously impacting the education of their classmates. This will contribute to an even greater teacher shortage than we currently have.

We live in a civilized society where **we can afford to take care of our vulnerable by providing the same access to opportunities for everyone.** ECcares has done so much for our family and it would be a huge disservice to these children and their families, educators, the school systems and our community if you cut this program. Do better.

The Donahues  
Eugene, OR. 97405

I love to share my experiences with all the amazing people involved with early intervention.

True even if it's just 2 to 12 people that combined into one big amazing team for your little to even down to you and your own experience of at home to at school. They are **there to listen and give you the best advice and guidance** of hope strength strategies of all kinds your little's mind can imagine. I came from a dark place of addiction to the recovery of having my son return back home to me with a fresh start again to make sure my son's life is a better life he could imagine I could give him for the rest of his growing mind of safety and guiding I get from the team of early intervention.

**They are there to make sure you and your little one is ready to move forward strong and mighty.** They take the time to work with you and what you think is best for you kiddo to what they work on at school to you having the chance to carry it back home to continue your little learning experience to thriving in there every day life.

With amazing in home visits from you kiddos teacher to speech therapy to physical therapy. With even more I could just keep sharing!!!

There all one amazing team that you could imagine 100%. Thank you all for you amazing work yours truly

Sharlene and Noah Smallwood  
97401

Hi,

My name is Chelsea Stotler and I currently have 2 children (2, 3.5 years old) in Early Childhood Cares. I heard they are at risk for losing funding and wanting to send an email to **show my support and how much this program has meant to me.**

Both my children were speech delayed, my oldest was 2 and still not even saying mama. We had Kat come over and do home visits as well as do the classroom settings they offer. She **provided so many tools, resources, information to give me the help I needed for my son to start talking.** His words are caught up now but you can barely understand any of them so now he is in a preschool program where he has people come in and help him with speech. He had a lot of behavioral problems and still does due to the fact that it is hard to understand him but **he has come a long way thanks to this program.**

My youngest son is still receiving home visits because he was speech delayed. We found out he wasn't able to hear due to fluid in his ear for awhile and again **this program provided lots of tools for me to learn and teach him sign language until he got his hearing back.** He is still speech delayed due to the hearing but has bi monthly **home visits that have been helping a ton.** Kat also went out of her way to learn so many more signs to help us, they provided us sign Language DVDs and now I know over 300 signs myself. **I had a very hard time bonding with Wesley and now we are so much better because I know how to work with him better.**

**This program has meant so much to my family and has been so helpful.** I wish more people knew about it, I came about it on accident

Thanks,  
Chelsea Stotler  
97448

Dear Oregon State Legislature,

My partner and I moved to Oregon amid the COVID pandemic back in February 2020; we had just given birth to our first and now only-child. After a few years of trying to settle into our new home, we **noticed a few delays with our daughters' development from crawling and walking to making sounds or not turning to us when we called her name.** We had little to no success when trying to find daycares that could help her developmental delays or when speaking to her main medical provider to get referrals to specialists. We were not sure if it could be associated with the pandemic's lack of socialization or complications due to her breech birth during my pregnancy, but **we knew we needed help, just weren't sure where to go from there.**

One rainy day our daycare wanted to speak with us, we met that afternoon, and they told us that they could no longer provide the care our daughter needed due to her lack of speech, unawareness of her surroundings and even having bursts of uncontrollable sobbing- we were dumbfounded by the news. That night I **searched online for anything that could help us and found ECCARES where I was able to complete an online application and soon after received a call within a few days. I felt an immense weight lifted off my shoulder** after that original call, **I remember having hope from that moment on.** I have nothing but gratitude from the person who called me from ECCARES and schedule our evaluation appointment to the therapists who evaluated my daughter and were able to validate all my concerns that I had been voicing to our pediatrician for the year prior. As of today, **my daughter has been attending the ECCARES program for over 2 years and it has been the most valuable program in our lives.** Her father and I work full-time, but **we've been able to stay connected with the staff at ECCARES from receiving daily pictures from her preschool class, to notes on her speech progress and soon she'll be entering Kindergarten well- equipped with everything she's learned. We feel completely confident in the care they've provided for our child as well as the patience and love they given her since the day they met her.** I highly recommend this program to everyone in our community and **hope it continues to not only be funded but to be expanded into more communities because I cannot imagine what our lives would be now without ECCARES.**

Sincerely,  
Elizabeth Ramos

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Eli Ramos".

Hello! My name is Aneva Halstead. **I am the mother of the sweetest boy named Oliver who has autism and ADHD.** Oliver is a little boy who has not been able to talk much since he was born. **He struggles with communicating, with behaviors and daily living at times. This absolutely has made life challenging for our family** and especially for Oliver. The help that EC Cares has provided I believe has absolutely shaped Oliver to who he is today and given him a chance to succeed. I do not believe that he would be as far as he is today without EC Cares services. **My son has received the BEST support for this program and they have people who absolutely care for these children & want them to thrive.** Oliver went from not being able to talk at all to saying over 30 words and is adding to his vocabulary all the time. Oliver has grown SO much. He has met many goals and working on some still. EC Cares has helped give my son time and resources. They have **helped my son learn to have a relationship with his peers and provide a safe environment for him to learn.** Without EC Cares I do not believe Oliver would be as far as he is today, I cannot stress that enough. **The early intervention he has gotten has been life changing. As a parent this resource has been absolutely amazing and heartwarming to see your child grow.** Oliver still has so much to grow and I am sad he will be outgrowing the program. I could never be thankful enough for EC Cares, their staff and all of their help. **Thank you for helping my son succeed and have a better life.**

Aneva Halstead  
97478



Amy Carranza  
amy@carranza.tech  
2170 West 27<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Eugene, OR 97405

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Amy Carranza and I am a parent of a child who sees Early Childhood Cares weekly. I am writing in support of the Early Childhood Cares program and **hope that my letter conveys the necessity of this program's funding and its benefit to the Lane County community.**

**Our son, Luke Carranza, was diagnosed in utero with an extremely rare brain condition** among others, including Hydrocephalus, Brachyurricephaly, Hypotonia, and more. Throughout pregnancy we were terrified of Luke's diagnoses and were afraid for our son's quality of life.

Almost immediately after being released from the OHSU NICU we were put in contact with Early Childhood Cares and our **Occupational Therapist, Brittany**. **Brittany has been instrumental in helping us walk the path of uncertainty and getting us connected with the resources Luke needs to be successful.** At this time, we have seen Britney for over a year and a half, and **I feel confident in saying that Luke would not be where he is today without her unwavering support.** Brittany has helped Luke - and Luke's caregivers - create routines that encourage gains across developmental areas and, as a result, Luke's prognoses continue to improve upon every developmental examination. **In addition to the tangible early interventions Brittany has provided, she has also shown incredible empathy, kindness, and has become a true ally in building Luke's support network. We are forever grateful for the impact she has had on our family.**

In addition to the invaluable occupational therapy provided by Early Childhood Cares, we would be remiss if we did not also explain how grateful we are for the equipment lending program through the agency. Luke has required multiple pieces of equipment from the lending library - bath chairs, gait trainers, standers, and more - to help him in his daily physical therapy and care needs. In all cases, these pieces of equipment have helped Luke develop the gross motor skills to allow him more bodily autonomy and have helped bridge the gap when insurance approvals were unfortunately too slow to accommodate the immediate medical need.

Thank you so much for taking the time to understand how this program has impacted our family and so many others in the Lane County community. **Please reach out if you have any questions and I would love to discuss the invaluable benefit of the Early Childhood Cares program further.**

Best,

Amy Carranza

**Jean Truesdale**  
256 W Dean Ave  
Eugene, OR 97404  
[truesdale.syd@gmail.com](mailto:truesdale.syd@gmail.com)

March 18, 2025

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to you as both a grandmother and a Direct Support Person in support of Early Childhood CARES.

My grandson, Luke Carranza, was born with an extremely rare hindbrain malformation called Rhombencephalosynapsis. Hydrocephalus is common with his condition and resulted in him having four neurosurgeries in his first month of life. **Shortly after coming home from the NICU, Luke began receiving services from EC CARES.** His OT, Brittany, comes to the home weekly to work with him and to **guide his parents down a path that, without her, would have felt almost impossible. From a prognosis that was uncertain at the start, Luke is now meeting many milestones and surprising us all on a daily basis.** Because of her hard work and dedication, Luke is thriving and the path no longer feels so impossible. In fact, it feels like anything is possible.

For Luke and the many children like him here in Lane County, **EC CARES is a program that is absolutely essential, it is a lifeline to them and to their families.** Luke will be needing services for much of his life. In these uncertain times, **parents of children with disabilities are facing stresses no family should have to deal with** and losing services could shut the door to their progress. It is my hope that you will see fit to **continue funding EC CARES** so that Luke and others will have the **opportunities that all children deserve.**

Sincerely,

Jean Truesdale aka Luke's proud Nana

