

March 25, 2025

Co-Chairs Sollman and Ruiz and members of the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education,

Thank you for your service to Oregon's children and future leaders. For the record, my name is Dan Goldman and I am honored and fortunate to lead the Northwest Regional ESD (NWRES) supporting improvement efforts for thousands of children from birth through age five and over 100,000 students in twenty K-12 school districts.

At Northwest Regional ESD, we deliver specialized, hard-to-fulfill services to ensure all students - regardless of their backgrounds - have access and success in Oregon's education systems. Through the work of ESDs, even the smallest, most remote school districts in Oregon can access highly trained specialists such as occupational therapists, psychologists, nurses, speech/language pathologists, and teachers who support children who are blind, deaf, hard of hearing, autistic and/or have a traumatic brain injury. Also through ESDs, every district has access to suicide prevention services, critical technology infrastructure, career-technical education support, technical assistance to support the goals of the Student Success Act, a myriad of locally responsive administrative services designed with their school districts.

ESDs turnkey federal and state initiatives in a meaningful, locally-relevant way. We deliver training and technical assistance to component school districts and early learning professionals, facilitate networking across joblike groups, connect local and regional partners across multiple sectors (such as industry and higher education), and interface with state agencies so that school districts can anticipate and shape improvement efforts in our public school systems. ESDs are fundamental to state improvement efforts and ensure critical statewide initiatives (such as early literacy investments, the Student Success Act, suicide prevention services, early childhood special education, and so much more) are equitably, systematically and responsively implemented.

Much of this critical public school infrastructure is supported through the Grants-In-Aid budget.

Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education: We urge an additional \$24 million investment.

The current funding proposal only maintains the severe cuts absorbed in the 2023-25 biennium based on lower enrollment during the pandemic. However, enrollment in EI/ECSE has now rebounded to pre-pandemic levels. "Current Service Level" for this program does not acknowledge that caseloads for early learning providers have exploded, while staffing levels have been reduced across the state. For Northwest Regional ESD alone, the proposed funding level does nothing to

replace the 80 FTE cut in the 2023-25 biennium, despite enrollment bouncing back to pre-pandemic levels.

These cuts have forced early intervention contractors like NWRESD to restructure programs, often sacrificing inclusion for children with disabilities - a devastating blow to the families and committed staff who are now stretched beyond limits. Furthermore, maintaining inadequate funding levels for EI/ECSE puts Oregon priorities and goals at risk:

- 54% of 3rd Graders in Special Education Meet Reading Benchmarks. Only 22% of 3rd graders are meeting literacy benchmarks, well below Oregon's goal. This program is a critical tool to prepare children for school age participation and success.
 - "Sadly, I have had less time with special education providers this year due to budget cuts, which means less progress for the kids. This is disappointing, because I have seen how children in preschool can make tremendous progress and then need less services in kindergarten. The providers are teaching more skills out of their service center, instead of visiting children's most natural setting where they can learn best. They care so much and are bending over backwards because they love these kids, but they are clearly strained." - Danine Brewer, Harvest Community Preschool in Hillsboro
- End Suspension and Expulsion in Preschools and Child Care in July 2026. HB 2166 found that one in every five Oregon children under five with delays or medical needs were asked to leave their child care or preschool in the course of a year. It's not uncommon for a child to be removed from two to three preschools before coming to our program.
 - "I've seen what it's like when preschoolers in special education get adequate support and what it's like when they don't. They make friends and get invited to birthday parties. I have fewer specialists coming in to work with my students, which means they aren't getting included the same way. We don't need new or other programs. We already have well-oiled machines that just need funding to keep doing it." -Jessica Wolfram, Happy Hollow Children's Center in Beaverton

[View more information about this program including a chart of spending over time.](#)

Regional Inclusive Services: We urge an additional \$50 million investment.

This program ensures students with high intensity disabilities can access their civil right to an education in their neighborhood school. NWRESD is one of nine agencies contracted to deliver

these services. When this program is underfunded, school districts must draw from other resources in order to guarantee those civil rights:

“Recently, I had to shift a reading intervention specialist to support a child with autism, taking away this literacy resource from all children. This happens all the time because the ESD is not funded adequately to provide the level of service my district needs. The quantity of kids who need services has increased, and their needs are more complex, while funding has stayed the same.”
Misty Wharton, Nestucca Valley School District Superintendent

[View more information about this program including a chart of spending over time.](#)

Student Investment Account Technical Assistance: We urge an additional \$7.5 million investment.

Through a technical assistance grant, we support districts to build and implement quality Integrated Plans reflective of community needs and student growth goals. Over the lifetime of the Student Success Act - through the expertise of ESDs - school districts have strengthened ongoing, two-way engagement strategies, embedding community perspectives into the fabric of their schools.

“NWRESA’s application organizer tool has been a valuable resource,” says Brooke Nova, assistant superintendent of academic services for Hillsboro School District. “It streamlines our planning and documentation processes, allowing us to align monthly priorities more effectively with focused discussions and targeted outcomes. Overall, the tool’s user-friendly meeting agendas make our monthly planning across our grant teams (HSS, Early Lit, SIA, FSI, etc.) much easier. We’re proud to use it as part of our strategy for student success.

[Read more about what this support looks like.](#)

School Safety & Prevention Services (SSPS): We urge maintaining all ESD’s capacity with 19.0 FTE across the state.

I would argue that Oregon’s youth have never experienced the levels of mental health dysregulation experienced today. When we should be investing in proven programs and research-based strategies to improve school systems’ capacity to help struggling students, this program is facing a reduction in the grants-in-aid budget as proposed by the Governor. Through SSPS funding, ESDs integrate school safety and prevention services with their districts in a manner that ensures students who have historically been pushed to the margins – students of color, students who identify as LGBTQ2SIA+, students who are learning English, students who are

experiencing mental illness – are successful and have a voice in the system that is meant to keep them safe.

NWRESD provides technical expertise, consultation, training and system development to educators, schools and community partners in several key safety and health prevention areas.

These include:

- Suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention
- Behavioral Safety (Threat) Assessment
- Crisis and tragedy response
- Problematic sexual behaviors, sexual harassment, and sexual violence
- Bias incident response and “Every Student Belongs” policy implementation
- Bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, and intimidation
- Transformative social and emotional learning
- School culture and climate of safety and belonging
- Mental health and wellbeing

The programs within the Grants-in-Aid budget are critical to the state’s improvement efforts and ensure access and equity for children and families farthest from opportunity in our school systems. I would welcome an opportunity to answer questions or discuss these critical programs further with the Committee.

Once again, the committed staff at NWRESD conveys deep appreciation for your service-



Dan Goldman | Superintendent

For more information contact

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