

Submitter: Celese Donahue
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee
On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5515

Good Afternoon,

Thank you Co-Chairs Ruiz and Sollman and the Members of the Education Subcommittee of Ways and Means. My name is Celese Donahue and I'm a parent of two children who have made significant progress while utilizing the ECcares program. I am here to advocate for an additional \$24 million in funding to be distributed to Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education.

Our children (who are 10 years apart) have both blossomed during the time enrolled in ECcares. Our older child 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. The ECcares teachers that worked with our son made significant progress on these skills and provided us with 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 kindergarten classroom with his peers; this would not have been possible without their support. Today, he is a high achieving 7th grader with a 4.0 GPA and is very active in sports and social clubs.

Our youngest child is currently receiving services through ECcares. He is 3 1/2, autistic, and has some developmental delays. 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, and he is also much more curious and social.

Children receiving early intervention and special education benefit immensely from the extra support they receive from their dedicated educators. It is an environment that works with them on their level to expand their communication and developmental skills to catch up with their peers. Every child deserves access to an education. The investment made to these programs will directly benefit our community and society as a whole. Please consider expanding funding to these programs. Our family is one of many who are very grateful that these resources are available to us. Thank you for your time.

Celese Donahue & family