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March 26, 2025

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Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities  
2475 SE Ladd Ave #231  
Portland, OR 97214

RE: Testimony on Senate Bill 5515 - EI/ECSE Funding (Neutral)

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To Co-Chairs Sollman and Ruiz and Members of the Subcommittee:

The Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities (OCDD) works to create change so that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) can live full lives as valued members of their communities. Every child deserves the chance to learn in integrated school settings that provide similar educational opportunities. Ensuring equal access to education for young children with disabilities means fully funding Early Intervention / Early Childhood Special Education (EI/ECSE).

EI/ECSE provides services to young children (from birth to age 5) who have an intellectual or developmental disability or other disabilities. The program supports preschoolers and their families by providing a range of services to help children develop the skills they need to be successful in school and life.

Investing in Early Intervention / Early Childhood Special Education at the “Adequate Service Level” of \$24 million above the “Current Service Level” (CSL) is a promise to Oregon’s youngest learners with I/DD that they will receive the foundational support they need. With over one million neural connections forming every second in the first three years of life at “a pace never repeated again,” early childhood is a critical period for brain development.<sup>1</sup> For children with developmental delays, investments in services that children receive early on

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<sup>1</sup> UNICEF, “Early Childhood Development: For Every Child, Early Moments Matter.” Available at <https://www.unicef.org/early-childhood-development>



in their homes and community settings help them make significant developmental gains. Those investments in the beginning stages of development reduce the cost of special education in K-12 schools, which in turn makes more funds available for other educational opportunities.

Funding EI/ECSE at the “Adequate Service Level” of \$24 million above the “Current Service Level” will decrease disparities in educational outcomes. Existing disparities are considerable. For example, there are large educational gaps as it pertains to graduation rates for people with or without disabilities in the United States. For people with disabilities aged 25 or over in Oregon, 11.5% have less than a high school education, whereas for those without disabilities that percentage is 7.1%. That translates to 65,000 Oregonians with disabilities who have less opportunity to secure stable employment, pursue higher education, achieve financial independence, and contribute fully to their communities.<sup>2</sup> By fully funding EI/ECSE at the “Adequate Service Level” (ASL), Oregon can close those gaps and ensure that all children have the opportunity to achieve their full potential regardless of disability.

Investments in early education for children with IDD also leads to a more positive return on public dollars spent, as those investments lead to improved workforce readiness, increased tax revenue, and decreased costs associated with long-term services and supports. Prioritizing EI/ECSE funding at the ASL strengthens communities and sets children with IDD on a path toward greater success. Addressing inadequate early investment in education for children aged 0-5 with IDD improves the opportunity for those early learners to benefit from inclusive school settings with equitable access to quality education.

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<sup>2</sup> Center for Research on Disability, [2025 Disability Compendium](https://www.researchondisability.org/annual-disability-statistics-collection/2025-compedium-table-contents/section-13-education-compedium-2025), Section 13, Table 13.5. Available at <https://www.researchondisability.org/annual-disability-statistics-collection/2025-compedium-table-contents/section-13-education-compedium-2025>