

3/26/2025

Re: Senate Bill 5515

Dear Members of the Senate Education Committee,

As the members of the statewide Autism Spectrum Disorder Professional Learning Team, we are made up of administrators and Autism Consultants/Specialists from all 8 regions of the state who administer services for students with Autism from birth through 21 in public schools. We are reaching out to ask for your support of SB 5515.

We urge you to support this bill in order to move toward proper funding and service levels for students with Autism and low-incidence disabilities closer to what would be suitable to support students' learning and developmental progress. Funding for Regional Inclusive Services has remained generally the same since 2009 when adjusted for inflation! Sadly, the population served by this program has grown by over 20%, resulting in the diminishment of our capabilities. While our service providers are excellent and they are committed to providing top notch service to their students, there is no way that quality services can be provided and maintained long-term at this funding level without a reexamination of the funding structure and the most efficient methods to provide this high level of expertise to this unique student population statewide.

Notably, in the rural areas of Oregon, services from Regional Programs that are offered in the public schools are the *only* way these students are able to access supports, equipment, and services tailored to their unique needs from specialized staff. Access to private speech, occupational, physical, or ABA therapies that are commonplace in the metro areas are non-existent or hours' drive away from rural areas. Regional Inclusive Programs are the only mechanism to ensure equity of service across our entire state for students whose specific needs require specialized materials and services.

This proposal is a step in the right direction to turn the tide for these students so that they may be able to have the specialized supports and services they need in order to experience the maximum level of meaningful inclusion in the general education setting, meet their educational goals, and to be prepared for life outside of school in higher education and the workforce. Please offer your support for the passage of SB 5515.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Kris Hudson & Christina Thompson - Autism Consultant

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