



**NORTHWEST**

March 26, 2025

To: Co-chair Senator Janeen Sollman and Co-Chair Representative Ricki Ruiz and members of the Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Education

Re: SB 5515 -- Financial administration of the Department of Education

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For the record, my name is Shannon Blood, and I am submitting testimony today on behalf of Reach Out and Read in support of the Department of Education’s grant-in-aid budget request.

Children who have positive experiences early in life are four times more likely to graduate from high school, experience better lifelong health, and have fewer costly interactions with legal and child welfare systems. Early education and care not only improve outcomes for our children but can eliminate future financial strain on our communities and state as well.

As an early literacy and relational health program, Reach Out and Read champions and promotes the positive effects of engaging in daily reading and other language-rich activities with young children and their parents. We do this work in partnership with medical clinicians during well-child visits, starting in infancy and going through age five. As a unique part of Oregon’s early care and education system, we know it takes a village and strong, coordinated systems to support Oregon’s children and families. The work we do now in the youngest years is the foundation for all future learning and life experiences.

Therefore, we strongly urge you to include the \$24 million for Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education (EI/ECSE). This program serves children with disabilities or significant delays in development, with services taking place in their homes and community childcare & early education settings. Children in EI/ECSE show significant gains in development that are foundational to supporting school readiness. In short, well-funded EI/ECSE programs are good for children and good for K-12 schools.

EI/ECSE sets children up for success in K-12 education and beyond - building a happier, healthier future for Oregon and reducing stress and expense for our schools and our state. When we choose children, we improve people’s lives and bend the cost curve on state spending driven by crises.

Thank you for your hard work and dedication on behalf of Oregon’s children and families.

Sincerely,

*Shannon M. Blood*

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