



To: Joint Ways and Means Education Subcommittee

Date: March 26, 2025

Subject: Testimony regarding Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education (EI/ECSE) and Violence Prevention Services (EMOPI) in SB 5515

Dear Co-Chairs Sollman and Ruiz and members of the Joint Ways and Means Education Subcommittee:

We are submitting testimony today in support of priorities that advance the support for students inside and outside of school in our unique contexts as urban districts. Your support for these programs means we can address the root causes that impact learning that happens in schools.

East Multnomah Outreach, Prevention & Intervention Services (EMOPI)

We know that with scarce resources, leveraging the expertise of many partners to solve big problems is where we get a big return on investment. Meaningful partnership models between school districts, law enforcement, and community-based organizations create crucial safety nets for support particularly for populations of young people that have been historically underserved by public systems. The East Multnomah Outreach, Prevention, and Intervention Program is a model program that leverages the relationships and expertise of all these institutions working together to reduce gun violence in East Multnomah County. The program serves a young, diverse, and economically disadvantaged community in our districts. The program has engaged over 20,000 youth through a variety of intervention services including education, employment, mentorship, and other prosocial interactions.¹ Launched in March 2022, EMOPI sets a foundation of comprehensive support for at-risk youth through culturally responsive outreach, prevention, and intervention programming - aiding in preventing youth violence and empowering youth to be successful members of the community. Gresham's program provides a foundation that provides long-term support for historically disadvantaged and underserved communities most impacted by gun violence to help stop the cycle before it starts.

¹ [City of Gresham press release, 2/8/25.](#)

- **Gun Violence Impacts Student Success:** Gun violence is a solvable problem that we have been making gains on, and by addressing it, we can give young people a better opportunity to thrive in school and in life. For this reason, we write to you in strong support of \$1.5 million in additional funding in YDD’s budget for the 2025-27 biennium to continue to provide outreach, prevention, and intervention services that have reduced gun violence in our community.
- **How it Works:** Through partnership with EMOPI, we are committed to providing alternative discipline interventions to students as well as preventative violence prevention measures designed to maintain student and school-wide safety. We seek to offer students who have been involved in weapons-related incidents an opportunity for rehabilitation and support in lieu of expulsion. Additionally, partnering with EMOPI on violence prevention allows students reporting gang affiliation or concern for personal safety due to community related incidents an opportunity to connect with preventative safety interventions. We seek to combine comprehensive safety measures with culturally-responsive intervention strategies including counseling and mentorship meant to address both immediate concerns and underlying factors.

Collectively, our districts are encouraged by this partnership. Providing additional interventions to students who have experienced gun violence while also taking concrete measures to prevent this violence increases school safety and limits potentially lifelong consequences for students. Additionally, providing students who experience gang affiliation or personal safety challenges a resource for support is critical to preventing gun violence incidents. Our goal is to continue to provide culturally responsive interventions that support students in the short term and help mitigate the underlying factors that lead to violence. EMOPI is a critical tool in this effort.

Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education Services (EI/ECSE)

Unlike most grant-in-aid programs, EI/ECSE is a federally mandated program that is based on caseloads, meaning that providers are not permitted to turn children away due to lack of funding. MESD through a partnership with David Douglas School District coordinates these services at the Multnomah Early Childhood Program.

- **Early Intervention & Support Impacts Student Success:** Early experiences, good and bad, have a profound and lasting impact on brain development. During the first three years, more than 1 million neural connections form every second. The brain grows faster at this stage than at any other time of life. Early childhood experiences impact a child’s future learning for the remainder of their lives. Investing in Oregon’s young children leads to better outcomes in K-12 education, and can have a ripple effect throughout communities. 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.

- **How it Works:** Strict guidelines mean that EI/ECSE providers must begin serving children with disabilities and developmental delays within 45 days of referral. In this program, we serve children before the age of 5, providing the first opportunity for them to receive the types of accommodations and supports they need to have a successful start in school. Our services are able to identify learning delays and disabilities early, allowing us to intervene that supports their academic success later in life.

We urge your support for increased investments in these critical programs that provide a strong start to students before they reach kindergarten and to address root causes of gun violence that impact student success.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Superintendent Frank Caropelo, Reynolds School District
Superintendent Paul Coakley, Multnomah Education Service District
Interim Superintendent John Koch, Gresham-Barlow School District
Superintendent James Owens, Centennial School District
Superintendent Ken Richardson, David Douglas School District
Superintendent Michael Lopes Serrao, Parkrose School District