



March 26, 2025

Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Education

Re: SB 5515, Oregon Department of Education, Recovery Schools Funding

Dear Co-Chairs Lieber and Sanchez; Co-Chairs Sollman and Ruiz; and members of the Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Education:

My name is Sandy Stack and I work at Southern Oregon Education Service District which serves 13 school districts and 52,000 students across the largest ESD region in Oregon, a 10,600 square-mile geographic area of Jackson, Josephine and Klamath Counties. Beyond that region, we also provide regional inclusive services to Lake and Douglas Counties. On behalf of SOESD, we are writing in strong support of funding ODE's Oregon Recovery Schools in the 2025-27 biennium, at the full \$12.7 million requested by the agency.

House Bill 2767 committed the Oregon Department of Education to provide equitable access to Oregon Recovery Schools by opening up to nine schools geographically distributed across the state. Currently, the first three existing Oregon Recovery Schools are located in the Portland and Salem areas.

While Oregon is facing a state-wide crisis related to substance use among adolescents, access to substance use services, and overdose rates among teens, the prevalence and needs are even more alarming and impactful within Southern Oregon communities. Our students self-report rates higher than the state in having unmet emotional and mental health needs, drinking, using marijuana, and using prescription drugs not prescribed to them. To exacerbate the crisis, Jackson county is experiencing a 47% overall service gap in recommended prevention, harm reduction, treatment and recovery services, and is tied with two other counties for having the highest risk of hospitalization for alcohol and drug use in the state. The Southern Oregon region has been identified as having the largest percentage statewide of organizations reporting inadequacies in their capacity to service clients. Schools across Jackson and Josephine Counties have been identified as an under-leveraged health and wellness support, with community members describing a shortage of full time personnel, and variability in the range of programs and services across their local schools.

Following the enactment of House Bill 2767, the Southern Oregon community rallied behind efforts to establish an approved Oregon Recovery School in our region. Community leaders from our CCO's, healthcare organizations, county public health, tribal health, juvenile justice, component school districts, treatment providers, and recovery organizations became actively involved to identify the needs within our youth population that could be supported through an Oregon Recovery School, and how to leverage collective resources within the community to ensure the complex needs of our students will be fully supported. To prepare for an Oregon Recovery School a planning administrator was hired through CCO grant funds and partners throughout the community pledged in-kind donations as well as parent training and mentorship.

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Southern Oregon stands ready to provide the essential supports and services our students with substance use disorders and co-occurring behavioral health conditions require. Unfortunately, the Governor's Recommended Budget does not support the addition of any new Oregon Recovery Schools, limiting access to students in the Willamette Valley, and leaving Southern Oregon without this critical life-saving resource despite having the highest risk of hospitalization for alcohol and drug use and the largest related service gap in the state.

The mission of our school will be to spark the hope, courage, and wellness needed for students to thrive by: supporting their learning, growth and recovery processes; honoring the dignity, innate value, and lived experiences of each individual; and engaging in personalized, meaningful learning opportunities that prepare them for their future.

We urge your support for these crucial services and ask that you fund ODE's recovery school budget request at its full capacity so we can serve Oregon youth in the greatest need.

Sincerely,

Sandy Stack
Recovery Supports Administrator
Southern Oregon Education Service District