

Submitter: Beatrice Clifton  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee  
On Education  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5515

Committee members:

This is the not-cut-for time version of my oral testimony:

My name is Beatrice Clifton and I am the manager of the Early Intervention & Early Childhood Special Education evaluation team for Northwest Regional Education Service District. For those not familiar with Early Intervention – EI – and Early Childhood Special Education – ECSE – EI serves children from birth up to age three and ECSE is for children ages 3 - up to entering kindergarten. Early Intervention is mandated by the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (I.D.E.A) part C and ECSE is under IDEA part B. EI and ECSE services are provided to all families at no cost, eligibility for the program is based on eligibility for special education services, not income or insurance.

Services are provided to students are based on individual needs and can include: specially designed instruction, speech and language therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy, school psychologist services, and specialists from our regional inclusive providers. In Oregon, for children who are in preschool, special education services are not provided by school districts even if a student is at a district preschool - services are provided by ESDs like ours. For our students who are leaving our program and entering kindergarten, we help facilitate the transition to special ed in K-12 school.

NWRESD serves four counties in the state - Washington, Columbia, Tillamook, and Clatsop counties. Currently, 2600 students are actively receiving services and my department wh handles referrals, intake, and evaluations for approximately 400 families on a rolling, on-going basis.

The current lack of appropriate funding has a real impact on your youngest and most vulnerable constituents. Recently, our program had to eliminate funding spots in community preschools which reduces the ability of all children to have an inclusive education. For some children, the only way they are accepted for enrollment -- or be allowed to continue with enrollment -- by preschools is if there are services being provided by agencies like ours. I have heard from many parents directly that preschools have told them they will not accept their child unless/until the child is in our program. The lack of funding meant that last June, multiple staff were laid off, costing not just services to students but the livelihoods of our educators – also your constituents. We do not have enough staff to provide fulsome services to meet the

needs of students.

While I cannot speak on the challenges the lack of adequate funding has caused for our regional neighbors, Multnomah Early Childhood program, Clackamas Education Service District, or Willamette Education Service District, I do know they are actively serving appx, 3,000, 1350, and 1360 children respectively.

I am asking each of you to act on this opportunity that you have to provide necessary and actually adequate funding for EI/ECSE (and regional services); the programs not only involve employing your constituents, they provide essential educational & developmental services to babies, toddlers, and preschoolers –all of whom have developmental delays and/or disabilities - arguably some of the most vulnerable people in our communities.

Thank you.

Béatrice Clifton  
Evaluation Team Manager  
? NWRES D EI/ECSE Program ?