



Support Senate Bill 5515
Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education
March 26th, 2025

Co-Chairs Sollman and Ruiz and Members of the Committee:

My name is Arielle Hacker and I am the Strategic Initiatives Coordinator at Prevent Child Abuse Oregon (PCA Oregon), a statewide nonprofit dedicated to the prevention of child abuse and neglect through upstream, community-based and comprehensive prevention strategies. I respectfully submit this testimony in support of the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) grant-in-aid budget (SB 5515), specifically the ODE funding allocated toward Farm to School, the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), and Early Intervention (EI) and Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE).

Every child deserves access to nutritious food, which is critical to healthy brain development—yet 1 in 6 children in Oregon don't have enough to eat.¹ The rate is 2-3x higher for Black, Latine, and Indigenous children.²

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) (HB 3201, \$4.5 million): CACFP provides reimbursement to providers serving nutritious meals and snacks to children in child care centers, afterschool programs, and children living in emergency shelters.³ CACFP improves nutrition and food security for children, makes child care more affordable for families, and stabilizes the income of child care providers.⁴ We know that access to nutritious meals are critical for healthy brain development, cognitive function, and emotional regulation.⁵

Farm to School (\$12 million): As a member of Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon's School Meals for All Coalition, we are also in strong support of Farm to School. Farm to School provides funding for schools and early childhood education programs to purchase Oregon foods, as well as provide farm and garden education and technical assistance for the farm to school community. With rising costs due to inflation, this modest increase in funding is needed to maintain the current level of programming. This funding will help students eat healthier and more locally, support Oregon farmers, and support our local economy.

¹ <https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2021/child/oregon>

² <https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2021/child/oregon>

³ <https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/childnutrition/cacfp/pages/community%20nutrition%20programs.aspx>

⁴ <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/why-cacfp-important>

⁵ <https://copakids.com/child-healthcare-news/the-connection-between-nutrition-and-learning-feeding-the-growing-brain/>

Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education (EI/ECSE) (\$24 million above CSL): This program provides services to babies, toddlers and preschoolers with disabilities. Services take place in the family's home and/or community child care & early education settings. Children engaged in EI/ECSE services show significant gains in development that are foundational to supporting K-12 school readiness. These early, formative years (0-5) are key to a child's growth, and early intervention can significantly enhance a child's ability to reach their full potential, reducing the need for more intensive and expensive services in the future. In addition to serving children, these programs provide critical support, tools, and services to families as they navigate caring for children with disabilities.

We urge you to support funding for CACFP, Farm to School, and EI/ECSE to ensure that our youngest Oregonians and their families have the support they need to learn, grow, and thrive.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to children and families in Oregon.

Sincerely,

Arielle Hacker

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