

Wednesday, March 26, 2025

RE: Oregon Department of Education grant-in-aid budget (SB 5515)

Chairs Sollman & Ruiz and Members of the Committee,

Early experiences, good and bad, have a profound and lasting impact on brain development and life outcomes – meaning these early years drive later state revenue and spending. During the first three years of life, more than 1 million neural connections form every second. The brain grows faster at this stage than at any other time of life. Yet 1 in 6 Oregon children experience food insecurity during this critical window of development, with rates 2-3 times higher in communities of color.

The Oregon Department of Education grant-in-aid budget includes critical programs that support children and their families in their first five years of life.

These programs set 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.

The Early Childhood Coalition has identified two investments above current service level in the Oregon Department of Education grant-in aid budget that are impactful and urgent:

- **Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education (EI/ECSE)** (\$24 million above CSL). This program serves children with disabilities or significant delays in development, with services taking place in their homes and community child care & 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.

- **Child & Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)** (HB 3201, \$4.5 million). This is a federally funded program that reimburses child care providers for the meals they serve to children in care. However, federal reimbursement rates have not kept pace with increasing food costs, and we see a decline in child care providers participating in CACFP. This passes the cost of food to families, who also cannot afford it. Oregon can address this as we have with the school meal program - by providing a supplemental reimbursement rate.

Now is the time to invest in our youngest children - so no future legislature is left addressing the long-term consequences of failing to invest in young children today.

Sincerely,

Adelante Mujeres

Ballmer Institute

Children's Institute

FACT Oregon

Families First Child Care Center

Happy Go Lucky Child Care

IRCO

Metropolitan Family Service

Neighborhood House

Northwest Regional ESD

Nurse-Family Partnership

Oregon Association of Relief Nurseries

ORAEYC

Our Children Oregon

Prevent Child Abuse Oregon

Reach Out & Read

Southern Oregon Early Learning Services

Yamhill Community Care

First Children's Finance

Sweet Peas Daycare & Preschool