



Gaston Public Schools

District 511JT – 300 Park St. Gaston, OR 97119

www.gastonk12.org

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May 8, 2025

Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Capital Construction
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support for Capital Funding – antkwak Early Learning Center

Dear Co-Chairs and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Gaston School District, I am writing to express our strong support for the \$2 million capital funding request for the antkwak Early Learning Center, a project being led by the Northwest Regional Education Service District.

This center will play a vital role in preparing children who will eventually enter our schools. The earliest years of a child's life form the foundation for lifelong learning, well-being, and development. The antkwak Early Learning Center will provide children and families with essential early learning experiences that are inclusive, culturally responsive, and deeply rooted in community collaboration.

As educators, we understand that children who enter kindergarten with strong academic, social, and emotional foundations are far more likely to thrive throughout their K–12 experience. The services offered by this center, including preschool, child care, early intervention, and family coaching, are critical supports that help ensure all children, regardless of background, get the strong start they deserve.

We are particularly encouraged by the thoughtful planning and community involvement that has shaped this project. Its comprehensive model addresses the very real and growing challenges faced by families in accessing high-quality early learning opportunities - challenges that often impact families with limited access to resources and support systems.

Investments in early childhood infrastructure like the antkwak Early Learning Center are rare, but they are essential. This project is not only an investment in early education; it is an investment in Oregon's future.

We respectfully urge you to approve this funding request and thank you for your continued leadership and support of Oregon's students and families.

Sincerely,

Summer Catino
Superintendent
Gaston School District