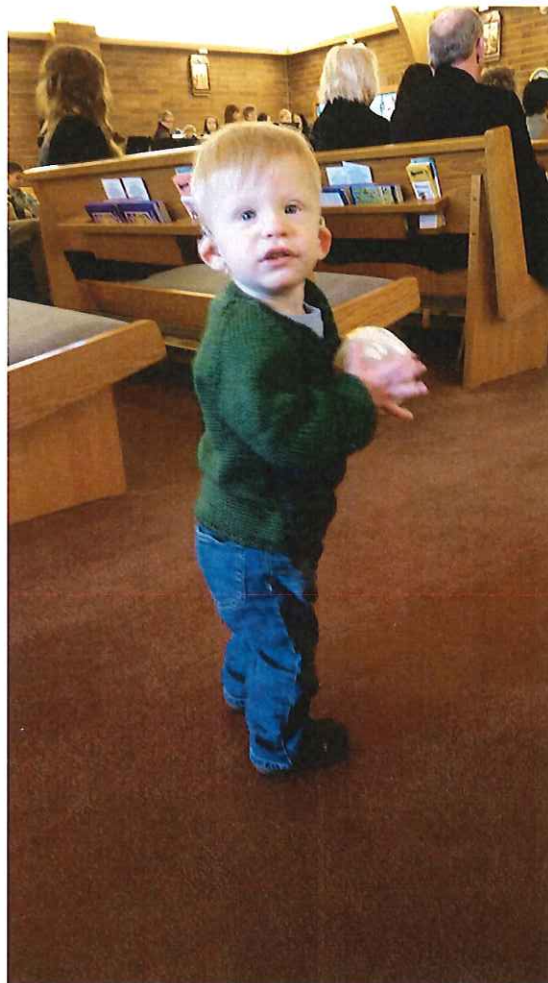


I see the audiology department. There is a teacher that comes to the house once or twice a month to help with communication and home play ideas.

My son is 18 months old now, he has been wearing hearing aids since 6 months old, I was originally seeing the audiologist at Providence NE. Started to become too far of a drive. So I began going to Clackamas ESD, I basically had to start the process all over again which is very emotional for me as he is my first child. Putting my feelings aside my son needs all the help he can get to achieve proper language and developmental skills for when he reaches grade school. I am very thankful to live in Clackamas County so he can receive all the care they have to offer.
Jessica Tankersley



March 8th, 2017

Dear Honorable Members of the Oregon Legislature,

I am writing you today to express my extreme gratitude towards the Columbia Regional Program and to their providers, teachers and team. After my son was diagnosed with hearing loss, I cried for hours because I did not want my baby to be different, I didn't want him to miss out on any opportunity in life because of his hearing loss. After my family was introduced to the CRP, we found compassion, caring and hope. I would like to share our story with you.

While living in Washington state, my son Adrien was diagnosed with moderate to severe hearing loss at the age of 2 ½. Shortly after, we moved to the Portland area where Adrien received his first set of hearing aids with the help of the Columbia Regional Program. As one can imagine, Adrien was a very frustrated little boy. He couldn't express his needs, wants, or verbalize anything. He was constantly throwing temper tantrums, hitting and biting when he was upset to try to show his dissatisfaction.

With the help of a Columbia Regional in-home speech therapist, we began introducing hearing aids to Adrien 15 minutes at a time and increasing gradually. He seemed to be handling it well until he flushed his aids down the toilet (one expensive flush!) I made a call to Adrien's audiologist and we started the process to get him a new set. Two weeks later, he had a new set and also a new-found respect for what he had been missing for those two weeks; the gift of hearing. From then on, Adrien truly began his journey to finding his true spoken voice and he couldn't have done it without the Columbia Regional Program.

Adrien took advantage of the preschool offered by the program held at a local elementary school where he met teacher Beth. He truly loved going to school and being around other kids just like him, with "robot ears" as we call them. Only super heroes get those ears! Adrien began saying simple words like animals, foods, colors, letters and numbers. He was still showing behavior issues; throwing tantrums and hitting when he didn't get his way, but now he was on his way to speaking and getting back on track.

Kindergarten was a transition for Adrien, he was going to a new school, meeting a new teacher, new kids in his class, riding the bus for the first time, and having school all day, 5 days a week. All of this and still only speaking single words (a few two word phrases) at 5 years old. The Columbia Regional Program was amazing how they integrated the Kindergarteners into school. Adrien had already known some of the kids in his class and had met some of the providers and teachers he would be working with. Teacher Julie was introduced into our lives and truly has been a blessing. That Kinder year Adrien had many behavioral issues due to his frustration. One instance resulted in a meeting between member of the school, his CRP caseworker and myself to try to come up with a plan to mitigate the issue. We were thankfully successful! The rest of the school year there was not one issue or complaint to report.

What I really loved about the program is the class being held in a mainstream school with the majority of children not being deaf or hard of hearing. This enables the CRP children to go into the mainstream classes on an ad hoc basis. They eat lunch with the mainstream classes and it not only exposes my son to mainstream, but also exposes the mainstream children to many students with "robot ears", it teaches them not everyone is the same, it teaches them compassion.

Kindergarten came and went as did 1st grade; Adrien is now in 2nd grade and is still taught by Teacher Julie. A lot of the kids in his class are the very kids he entered with. He no longer has any uncommon behavior issues, in fact in September, Adrien was given an award at a school assembly for Friendship. He was very honored and excited to receive it. This last month, he again was called on stage to receive an award, this time for Honesty. Adrien now can speak sentences and he also loves to help out other kids in his class when he sees them getting frustrated. For math class, Adrien goes into a mainstream class with an interpreter, the plan for next year is to have him do the first semester going to two mainstream classes and three during the second semester if everything is successful. Also this year, the program has begun offering free classes for parents and family members to learn sign language which I participate in along with Adrien's dad and grandmother.

I truly dedicate Adrien's success and thriving to the Columbia Regional Program. They have been phenomenal not just in working with Adrien, but in providing assistance to my family from the moment we moved to Oregon 5 ½ years ago. My hope is for any child that is given the diagnosis of hearing loss to have access to this program and their current resources; without it would be truly a disservice to them and their families.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Betsy Estrada



March 10, 2017

RE: Columbia Regional Program

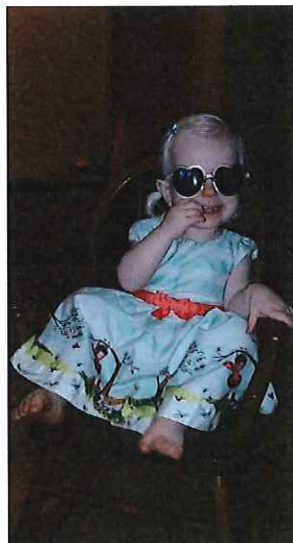
Dear Honorable Members of the Oregon Legislature,

We are currently receiving services from the Columbia Regional Program (CRP) for our daughter who is visually impaired. Our daughter has a condition called albinism which significantly impacts her vision. Her condition causes low vision (often legally blind), light sensitivity (photophobia), rapid eye movement (nystagmus), and misaligned eyes (strabismus). Combined these issues make her low vision issues complex. When she was diagnosed with albinism her ophthalmologist strongly suggested we enroll her in early intervention services. She began service when she was six months old and is now two years old. Their services have been incredibly valuable and have meant a lot to us.

The Teachers of Visually Impaired (TVI) that we have been working with us visit frequently and provide tools and information about how to help our daughter thrive despite her visual impairment. They provide books and activities appropriate for her vision that encourage cognitive and physical development, much like her visually abled peers receive in their everyday interactions. They also visit her daycare and help to educate her caregivers about activities and accommodations needed for her visual impairment and tools they can do to help her thrive in that environment. As parents we do this too, but we rely on their expertise to help us support her. We have also received services from their Orientation and Mobility (O&M) specialists. For example, even though our daughter had been walking for months she was struggling to do so at daycare and other places outside the home. The O&M specialist visited us at home and at her daycare to evaluate the situation and provide us with information on how to help her get through the issue. She has made a lot of progress since then. Due to the type of vision issues she will need to rely on the services that TVI and O&M provide.

Sincerely,

Rowda Skinner , Rob Felkel & Madelyn





Tamara,

I want to thank you for all that you do at CROS.

Your choice in equipment purchases, including the bright colors you choose make a valuable difference in the lives of kids and families. Here is an example.

You ordered a bright orange imp trike that I have begun using with a preschooler. This child is non-verbal, attends a community preschool and has begun to walk using a walker this year. However, when he walks, he walks for a short distance and then often slumps to the ground and lays there until he gets the attention of an adult. Adults sing to him and encourage him, but peers often ignore him and he ignores his peers.

Several weeks ago I brought the trike to his preschool and it has been a game changer! This week he figured out how to pedal and even steer the trike through the doorways and on/ off the elevator of his preschool. The kids in his class get excited about seeing him on his 'orange trike'. They wait for him, encourage him...it's been fabulous! The whole school has started a movement program and until the trike, this student needed 1:1 adult help and did not participate. This week he rode himself into the middle of the group, stopped appropriately and while sitting on the trike looked at his friends, participated in the songs by swaying his body, moving his arms and smiling more than we've ever seen. The other kids were smiling too!

Also, last week on the playground he rode up to someone who was blowing bubbles (a child not in his class, that he'd never engaged with before) and started vocalizing. This child said, "Do you want to blow bubbles" and because our student was at the same height as his peers and was stable, no adult needed to assist and the two of them blew bubbles together. The other child held the bubble wand up to our child's mouth and they began a social engagement.

This is huge for children like this!

Thank you for all of the time and energy you put into getting this wonderful equipment for the children I serve.

With much appreciation!!!

Jane Johnston, MSPT
Physical Therapist
Multnomah Early Childhood Program

Dear. Honorable Members of the Oregon Legislature

My name is Annette Smith, my Son Ryley McCollum has been receiving services through Columbia Regional since 2014 & is currently receiving services for Audiology. We found out my Son was Hard of Hearing when he was 3yrs old.

I struggled to find my son help for 6mos being bounced around to about 3 different audiologist & not getting anywhere finally Early intervention past me the info for Columbia regional & that really got things rolling for my son.

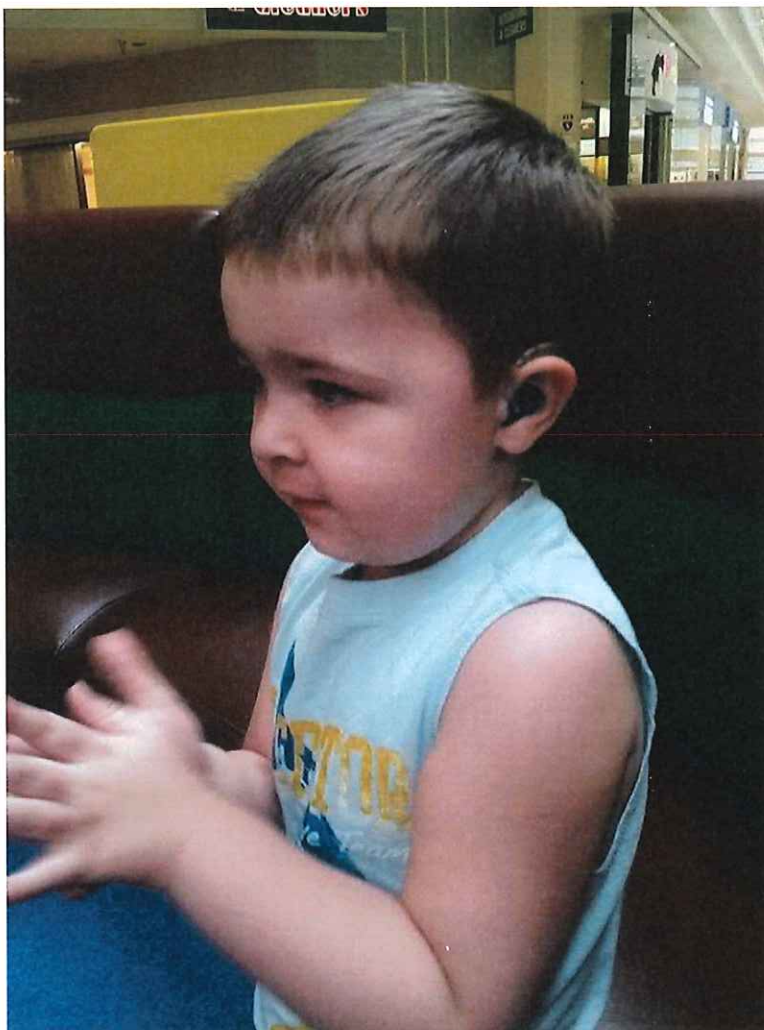
They also informed me they offered preschool for deaf & hard of hearing which was perfect cuz my son was not doing well in his preschool & was very withdrawn. Within a month in their program I knew he was on the right track. I started seeing him coming out of his shell & started seeing him sign & pronouncing words better.

I really feel very supported in many different ways & my son is finally getting support & the help he needs to become more successful in his education. I feel we are a team & the have my sons best interest at heart.

Columbia Regional has been such a blessing to my family in so many ways. As a parent it brakes the heart to see your child struggle & you can't help. This program has gave my son a voice & is giving him a foundation to form the rest of his life. To me I am forever grateful for having this program.

Thank you
Annette Smith

Sent from my iPhone



March 9th, 2017

Dear Honorable Members of the Oregon Legislature:

My name is Larry Huertas-Segura. I am a freshman at Cleveland High School in the deaf program. The deaf program helps me a lot. I get help with American Sign Language (ASL). I get help with reading, writing and math. If I don't understand in the mainstream or if I have communication breakdowns, I can go to the deaf classroom for help. I get repeats and practice. The technology I use (computers, ipad and videophone) is helpful. I am grateful for my interpreters. I am behind in language and the interpreters help me pay attention in class. They tutor and help me understand.

I also get help from a speech therapist and school psychologist. My speech therapist helps me talk. We work one-on-one. She covers her mouth and I listen for the word. She helps me talk and I am improving. The school psychologist helps me when I have bad behavior. I express myself and improve. He helps me understand unacceptable behavior like touching and bothering people. I don't want to have blow-ups. I want to communicate in private.

My classroom teacher helps me with language. Before my language was low. I need help to improve my sign language skills. She helps me when my brain is dreaming. She turns on my brain and helps me improve language and understand what words mean. I am not lazy and I pay attention. I need help with spelling and understanding words. I learn the words for everything I see in the room like pencil, technology and table. I don't want to be behind. I am catching up and improving my skills at a higher level. I continue to learn and understand with clear language.

Thank you,
Larry Huertas-Segura

February 21, 2017

Dear Honorable Members of the Legislature,

I am writing to voice my support for the Columbia Regional Program. Our family has utilized Columbia Regional for a variety of resources during the past five years. My son, Sam, was diagnosed with autism at 25 months old. Immediately we were thrown into an unknown world and felt afraid and lost. Columbia Regional was one of the first resources we discovered and through their amazing parent trainings, we were able to better understand our son's diagnosis and how best to support him and help him live a whole life.

As Sam got older our needs changed. Upon entering school, Sam was able to be in a general education classroom next to his older sister (part of that whole life dream!), but needs the assistance of a 1:1 para-educator. Columbia Regional worked with our school last year on ways to best engage Sam, involve his peers, help him learn the schedule of his day and participate in his schoolwork.

This year Columbia Regional has stepped up and provided Sam and his school with an amazing amount of support & training from their staff. At his yearly progress report we discovered Sam was not meeting his IEP goals, due mainly to communication frustrations. Columbia Regional is currently implementing PECS with Sam/staff and facilitating the SETT process with our school, which involves an in depth look at the breakdown of Sam's day, identifying his successes and areas we can support his growth. This is a multi-meeting approach and was facilitated in an in-depth and professional manner by Columbia Regional staff.

Columbia Regional continues to check in with Sam's school staff and team weekly to provide training so that Sam can successfully have a form of communication to more fully participate in his school work and socially in his classroom.

Without Columbia Regional, Sam would still be struggling to find his voice, simply being an incredibly brave 6 year old boy and trying to make his way mute throughout his day. It breaks my mother heart to imagine this. Now Sam is engaged, encouraged and a plan is in place to give him a voice, a chance, to be a student and learn alongside his peers.

Please continue current funding levels for Columbia Regional and their vital services. My son and many children like him depend upon them.

Sincerely,

Karen Houston
Portland, Oregon
District #24
rk_houston@msn.com



Dear the Joint Subcommittee on Education Co-Chairs, representative Betty Comp and Senator Rod Monroe,

I write this letter on behalf of my 15 year old son, Isaiah Dingsmore, my family, and on behalf of many others friends and acquaintances from the state of Oregon.

My son was diagnosed at the age of six months as being both congenitally and totally blind. At that time we did not have any direction but somehow found ourselves contacting the Columbia regional program. After I called, they immediately came out to our home to do an assessment of my baby. Shortly thereafter we began therapy with them...working on his speech, his mobility and getting him adjusted to the visual world without possessing it Himself. The regional program helped us with early intervention and finding us a Montessori school for Isaiah. They also played an important role in providing him with a one on one assistant that was detrimental to his learning..and so that he could attend school. No schools would accept him unless he had one on one assistant nor could we financially afford one either (as with many parents of children with disabilities)...so these services were/are amazing and much appreciated. We, as parents and others/teachers/doctors that worked with Isaiah were always kept in the loop and provided progress notes during home visits so that we also could learn for our child. Especially when it came to the behavioral support, communication skills, social stories, and his sensory needs that clearly needed to be Met by professionals. They provided Isaiah with the Necessary learning tools that he needed such as his Brailer, abacus, talking devices, adapted computer programs, etc. None of which we could find elsewhere, more specifically at any public schools.

At the age of 2 1/2 I began having concerns that there was something else challenging Isaiah and his ability to reach his full potential. Blindisms and autistic symptoms are very similar in nature, therefore it was hard to make a proper diagnoses and we would not have been able to do so without the support of the Columbia Regional program. At the age of 4, Isaiah was diagnosed with autism as well. Again we were faced with not knowing where to go, but little did we know at that time that the Columbia regional program could assist us in getting the help we needed for Yet a second, devastating diagnoses. I was so focused on my own sons blindness that it hadn't even occurred to me that the regional program was also out there supporting many others and their disabilities as well.

As the years went on Isaiah was able to learn how to function out into the community with his mobility instructor, read and write braille with his Braille instructor, to cook, clean, help with chores, to make friends, and to attend other social activities that the regional program supported that we otherwise would not have had. As you may know, "typical students" have the ability to participate in programs and activities and To seek them out. The "impaired" typically do not. The Oral hull week long camp was one of those activities that the Columbia regional program put on every year that Isaiah could and was eager to participate in every year! And it gave mom and dad and siblings the respite care/break that was also desperately needed for that week! I have never seen my son smile as much as he did on the last day of camp when I picked him up. There is no way to express the feelings on those few and far between days. It has been comforting to know that the teachers from the Columbia Regional program have remained a constant and consistent part of Isaiah's life. He still knows all of them by name, sound, and smell and mostly...because they were always there for him. And we still connect with them as often as we can and they still meet with me to loan out materials and assist me in communicating difficult things to Isaiah at times. Isaiah is now a residential student at the Washington school for the blind but it was due to the support of the regional program that he was finally able to get in there. Even though Isaiah has reached the age of 15, we are grateful that the Columbia Regional program continues to support and attend Isaiah's IEP meetings and continues to involve us in their monthly/daily living skills, leisure, social, programs that that they offer. We appreciate those very special and talented teachers that have had their own hands on experience and knowledge of our very special kiddos. It is something that I have yet to find in any public school and we have tried several. Although the regional programs have trained many individuals that have worked with Isaiah in the past, there is still not many teachers in the public system that compare to the regionals teachers and their direct experience (often years), knowledge, care, and concern over our young ones.

Thank you so much to the regional program from the bottom of my heart as my 15-year-old son is now a successful young man that can read braille, operate an iPad, operate a computer, go to school dances with friends, work outside of the home,
Speak properly and kindly to others, and help make a lovely dinner for his mommy!

And for these reasons and many many more it is my opinion that if these types of services were reduced for our kiddos (and they're already limited as it is), the impact on our children and their families would be devastating to say the least. I wish I could be there in person. Thank you so much for your time.
Sincerely,

Jessi Pelinski
2420 Hughes drive
West linn, or 96068
503-880-6368

My son Ben was born 14 weeks prematurely. He weighed 2 ½ pounds and was 14 inches long. He was immediately placed on a ventilator to help him breathe. After three months in the Neo-Natal Care Unit at Emanuel Hospital, Ben was diagnosed with Retinopathy of Prematurity (ROP). ROP is an eye disease the results from the abnormal development of the retina in premature babies. Ben endured three eye surgeries to correct this problem, but they were not successful. Ben is blind with light perception.

I brought Ben home from the hospital and I was lost. I did not know any blind people or how to best help my blind infant. I started calling agencies I had found in the phone book looking for someone who could help my baby. With each phone call I got more discouraged because no one seemed to know what to do with a blind infant or child. These agencies only worked with blind adults. Finally, I was referred to early intervention services and they contacted Columbia Regional Vision Services. A teacher for the visually impaired (TVI) came to my house to work with Ben. She knew exactly what he needed to start interacting in this strange new environment.

In the beginning, Ben cried all the time. He didn't roll over or sit up and was slow to eat solid food. At his two year developmental check-up, he still was not walking or talking. The doctor told me he had neurological deficits. I asked what that meant and she suggested that I not get my hopes up in regards to Ben's developmental process. I was devastated. Regardless of this news, my vision teacher worked even harder with Ben. She suggested sign language and tangible symbols for communication. We put Ben in a walker so he could feel the difference between being upright versus lying on his back. She reassured me that Ben would grow to his full potential. We just had to keep working with him.

Fast forward 14 years later, and Ben is 5 feet 10 inches tall and weighs in around 170 pounds. He attends school with 700 other middle school students and is educated in regular classes with his peers. He is an honor roll student, plays the trumpet, and has joined the after school chess club. He is supported at school by a vision teacher who transcribes Algebra into Braille Nemeth code, works with him on JAWS software, and adapts other material and assignments, so Ben can access them on an iPad with a Braille display.

Ben also receives instruction from a Mobility Instructor. Together they work on cane travel skills. Once not being able to walk, he now zooms through his school independently with a cane in hand. He has recently learned to take the city bus with another visually impaired student to their goal ball practice, a sport for the visually impaired. He has learned to cross the street at a lighted intersection and walk a few blocks to the practice location.

Columbia Regional Vision Services has been invaluable. I have no idea what I would have done without their expertise. Blindness in children is a low incident occurrence and because it doesn't happen often, knowledge about how to work with these kids is lacking in the community. Ben is successful because of the support, knowledge, equipment, and skills provided by Columbia Regional Vision Services. Please continue to fund this program to its fullest capacity. Ben would not be where he is at without their services and is on his way to being an independent adult, reliant only on his self, and his blindness skills.

Crystal Schumacher, 1280 NE 18th Street, Gresham, OR 97030

March 10, 2017

Dear Honorable Members of the Oregon Legislature:

My name is Sara Outcalt. I am a classroom teacher for Deaf students at Cleveland High School. My students are profoundly deaf and use American Sign Language (ASL) to communicate. Ninety percent of deaf students in the U.S. have parents who *do not* know sign language and can't communicate with their children. My students fit that statistic; in fact some their parents do not speak English, which makes communication at home even more limited.

In my class we work on skills beyond academics. We work on helping students communicate with their parents and help them become more integrated and independent at home. We work on independent living skills, community engagement, personal safety, language and communication skills, as well as social and emotional health. We provide Specially Designed Instruction, remove barriers, and support the students in their mainstream classes. Instruction is individually based and tailored to students' preferences, interests, and needs.

Teaching a small self-contained class, I able to work with students one-on-one and/or in small groups with other deaf peers. I am able to truly personalize my instruction based on student need. I am able to address behavior by using positive behavior supports, increase family involvement, connect students to resources, teach how to access an interpreter and how to self advocate, teach about deaf culture and incorporate culturally relevant topics, integrate students into the community, facilitate conflict resolution, and teach independent skills.

The biggest testimony of having a small class with direct instruction in American Sign Language is the growth in our students. They truly transform and I believe this is possible because of the time and resources that I am given to meet their needs. In closing, I would like to emphasize the point that language instruction and communication for our students tends to *only* happen during school. This means it is crucial that our classrooms continue to be funded and supported. Our classroom students' needs are much greater than what can be handled in a traditional special education class. Students who are profoundly impacted from their hearing loss benefit from a class with direct instruction in American Sign Language with a teacher who is specialized to meet their needs. With appropriate supports set in place, our students will evolve into independent, healthy and happy adults.

Thank you,

Sara Outcalt