

# Susan Bender Phelps

1855 NW Albion Court, Beaverton, OR 97006 503-890-0971 susanbp@odysseymentoring.com

February 13, 2018

Oregon Senate Revenue Committee

Dear Chair Hass, Senators Boquist, Riley, Taylor, and Baertschiger

As a business owner, parent, grandparent, member of the Washington County Kids Steering Committee, and past member of the Washington County Commission on Children & Families, I join more than 140 individuals and local organizations in requesting that you support the passage of SB1515. This bill will allow local communities to fund out of school time programs that support kids' success in life, career, and school if they wish to do so.

Before moving to Oregon, 17 years ago, I ran a non-profit in Albuquerque New Mexico that provided mentoring programs for at-risk middle school students. Over 15 years, I saw how our program transformed the lives of dozens of children each year for 15 years. As a non-profit, we struggled to obtain adequate funding. Our were free to the students we served and their schools. The non-profits that offer programs here also struggle to raise enough money to fully deliver on their vital missions.

With the dissolution of the Commission on Children & Families, came the almost exclusive commitment by the state to fund early childhood programs for children ages 0-6. It is a strategy to put resources where they can do the most good. I applaud the good intentions, but funding is still woefully short for what our children need.

Furthermore, many of the older children who received these early learning services will no longer receive them after age 6. Life doesn't stop once a child reaches age 6. Families lose their homes; parents and grandparents become ill or pass away. Socialization becomes a challenge as children become teenagers. If parents cannot afford enrichment, after-school, or summer programs, their children lose ground and fall far behind their peers who have the luxury of access to them.

This legislation will allow communities like ours to address the specific issues our children face by providing voter-approved local funding for programs they need. All we ask is for you to give us the opportunity to present this to voters. This solution won't be a fit for every county or community. In Washington County, early polling showed voter support. Other counties are watching to see how we do.

These programs keep kids safe and off the streets, provide care after or before school, help kids retain over the summer, what they learned during the school year, and more. Please support SB1515. It will fund programs delivered by non-profit service providers who never get the funding they need to fully accomplish their missions. More children and families will be served. Thank you.