



March 31, 2021
Members of the Oregon Senate
900 Court St. NE, S-303
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Honorable Members of the Oregon State Senate,

This letter is presented to you on behalf of administrators and service providers from Southern Oregon's Regional Inclusive Services (formerly Regional Programs) who are tasked to take care of the special needs of approximately 1,700 children and students in 29 school districts across a five-county region. Our 1,700 children, age birth to twenty-one, are presenting highly complex needs, and have disabilities such as Autism, Vision Impairment, Deaf and Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind, Orthopedic Impairment, or Traumatic Brain Injury. Our administrators and staff at the Southern Oregon Education Service District partner with component school districts and other ESDs to provide an economy of scale in supporting these children whose access and success in the general educational setting and curriculum depends on highly specialized services that they receive through the Regional Inclusive Services (RIS).

The attached one-page legislative talking points document depicts a very concerning trend of declining funding for these students over the past decade. Some of our specialized programs are at a breaking point because of budget constraints, unable to fund critical services that we used to provide, leaving many of our students without services that had to be dropped. The current budget proposal for the upcoming biennium is expected to result in additional decline in service levels.

Additional funding of \$10 million to support RIS for the 2021-2023 biennium can begin to restore service levels reduced since 2009. The passage of Senate Bill 53 will result in an examination of Regional Inclusive Services and long-term adequate funding. We believe this study will conclude that achieving adequate service levels may require an additional \$50 million.

As you consider SB 5513, your approval of \$10 million now is just a start in the right direction. The extra \$10 million would allow RIS in Southern Oregon to employ much needed additional staff to increase our capacity to provide meaningful and equitable basic services for all regionally eligible students in our five-county service area. We could restore some lost services and possibly even purchase additional technology and equipment for our students. We could increase evidence-based practices and professional development that we are currently unable to afford.

Your support for increased Regional Inclusive Services funding can reverse a decade-long decline in per-student funding for some of Oregon's most vulnerable children, after many years of being short-changed. For additional information, please feel free to contact Agnes Lee-Wolfe, Coordinator of the Regional Inclusive Services in Southern Oregon at 541-776-8590 x 3161 or at Agnes_Wolfe@soesd.k12.or.us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Scott Beveridge", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Scott Beveridge, Superintendent
Susan Peck, Director of Special Education
Agnes Lee-Wolfe, Special Programs Coordinator
Andrée Johnson, Special Programs Coordinator
Dale Balme, Special Programs Coordinator

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