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Senate Bill 53 - Definition Updates to Regional Programs

Senate Education Committee

February 1, 2021

Chair Dembrow, Vice Chair Thomsen, and member of the Senate Education Committee, my name is Jessica Ventura, Government Relations Director for the Oregon Department of Education. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of Senate Bill 52, which will update the statutes regarding Regional Programs to align with the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

There are eight regional programs providing specialized services and support across Oregon for over 11,000 children from birth to 21 with low incidence/high need disabilities that include: autism spectrum disorder, blind and visually impaired, deaf and hard of hearing, deafblindness, orthopedic impairment, and traumatic brain injury. The eight regional programs are:

- Eastern Oregon (Intermountain ESD)
- Central Oregon (High Desert ESD)
- Southern Oregon (Southern Oregon ESD)
- Cascade (Linn-Benton-Lincoln ESD and South Coast ESD)
- Willamette (Willamette ESD)
- Columbia (Portland Public Schools)
- Lane (Lane ESD)
- Northwest (Northwest Regional ESD)

Children experiencing these disabilities require specialized services from professionals who are licensed and specifically trained in their unique disability areas. The regionalized model allows for an economy of scale that gives eligible children in all areas of the state access to essential services in their community schools.

Oregon Revised Statutes 343.236 and 343.239 are currently out of alignment with recent clarifications through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), guidance from the Office of Special Education (OSEP) in 2016, and findings from a 2018 Secretary of State Audit.

The Oregon Department of Education has solicited input from the Education Service District (ESD) Superintendents that oversee the eight regional programs in Oregon to revise the language to assure that Oregon continues to receive federal funding to operate Regional Programs for infants, toddlers, children and students with low incidence, high needs disabilities.

Revision of Oregon Revised Statutes 343.236 and 343.239 is necessary to meet IDEA requirements and assure continued federal funding of Regional Programs that serve children and students in Oregon with low incidence, high needs disabilities.

The proposals in this legislative concept are largely technical in nature. They do not add or subtract any programs. For that reason, we do not anticipate a fiscal impact for these proposals.

Respectfully,

[Jessica Ventura](#)

Government Relations Director
Oregon Department of Education