



January 24, 2023

Chair Michael Dembrow
Vice-Chair Suzanne Weber
Members of the Senate Education Committee

RE: SB 531 - Investing in Community-Based, Culturally Responsive Summer Learning and After-School Programs

Dear Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Weber, and members of the Senate Education Committee,

On behalf of Foundations for a Better Oregon, I write today to express our **support for the Oregon Legislature's commitment to fund summer learning and after-school programs in SB 531**, and encourage the Senate Education Committee to **further develop this investment's design and implementation in collaboration with the many community-based and culturally specific organizations who support children and families across the state.**

To address the COVID-19 pandemic's disruption to academic learning, Oregon has a responsibility to ensure that every child is ready and able to learn, with targeted support for our state's underserved and most impacted youth and families. This requires an equitable and holistic strategy that cares for the physical and mental well-being of youth, nurtures their social and emotional growth, and accelerates academic learning during the summer and after school.

When the Oregon Legislature made historic investments in summer learning in 2021 and 2022, state leaders recognized that schools can't and shouldn't do this work alone. These public investments were strategically designed to make a stronger and more equitable impact by directing \$90 million to community-based organizations, including culturally specific providers, to ensure summer learning opportunities reached underserved youth and communities.

Community-based organizations are critical partners in this work. They have established roots in their communities and hold deep trust with underserved youth and families. They design and deliver culturally relevant programs in safe and joyful environments that boost academic engagement, meet unique family and community needs, and embody the defining features of successful summer learning for youth, including building strong and trusting relationships with peers and adults, nurturing a sense of belonging and empowerment, and by ensuring summer experiences are connected to community, culture, and a sense of place.

To build a strong and equitable public education system, Oregon must continue to invest in community-based organizations as a critical part of our state's learning ecosystem. **Foundations for a Better Oregon urges the Committee to partner with community-based organizations to design SB 531 and shape Oregon's next historic investment in summer learning and after-school programs.** Their expertise, experience, and partnership is essential to helping Oregon youth heal, learn, grow, and thrive this summer and into the future.

Sincerely,

Whitney Grubbs
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