



Oregon Legislature  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, OR 97301

February 6, 2024

To the Esteemed Chair, Vice Chair, and Esteemed Members of the Committee,

Greetings! In response to a budget request to support the Regional Inclusion Schools (RIS) programs, the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) has highlighted the challenges faced in determining funding availability for these programs due to a turbulent beginning to the 2023-25 biennium. ODE emphasizes the ongoing struggles of the RIS Program with insufficient funding. During a recent presentation to the Interim House Education Committee, ODE outlined the impacts of inadequate funding on staffing levels and service quality, including potential reductions in direct services, staffing shortages, and difficulties in fulfilling the requirements of IDEA for each child's education. Additionally, ODE addressed the funding gap of \$22M for EI/ECSE programs in the second year of the biennium, resulting from overfunding in the first year. They underscored the necessity of additional funding to ensure continuity of services in the second year and urged the legislature to appropriate the required funds.

**Bridges Oregon SUPPORTS this Bill with \$22M allocation.**

Established in 2017, Bridges Oregon, Inc. stands as a statewide culturally and linguistically specific and responsive nonprofit organization serving Oregonians who are Deaf, DeafBlind, or Hard of Hearing or face other communication barriers. It is in our mission to facilitate equity and inclusiveness and to provide a bridge to opportunities through advocacy, education, and communication.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and we remain open to further discussions and collaboration on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Chad A. Ludwig, MSW, ADAC, OHCI, CDI  
Executive Director