



**NORTHWEST**

April 16, 2025

To: Co-chairs Senator Leiber, Representative Sanchez, and Members of the Joint Committee On Ways and Means.

Re: 2025 Statewide Budget Priorities at Community Budget Hearings

My name is Zakiya Jackson. I live and work in Oregon's Senate District 17 and House District 33. I am submitting testimony in support of the [investments identified by the Early Childhood Coalition](#), especially early literacy services such as those provided by Reach Out and Read to 87,000 Oregon families each year. As an early literacy and relational health program, Reach Out and Read partners directly with pediatric clinicians to help build foundations for school and life success by supporting early literacy and healthy relationships through parent-child shared reading.

Early experiences have a profound, lasting impact on brain development and life outcomes. James Heckman, a Nobel Prize winning economist, states investments in young children are the most cost-effective use of public dollars with the greatest return. I know you face significant uncertainty this budget cycle, but strategic investments that give families opportunities to thrive in difficult times are critical. I urge you to stay the course and to **not** make any preemptive cuts to services.

Please include the \$25 million for early literacy as described in POP 580 so that the Department of Early Learning and Care's [Birth Through Five Literacy Plan](#) can realize its three main goals to:

- increase access to culturally specific early literacy programs for children birth to age five,
- provide training and coaching for direct service staff in early literacy, and
- develop and expand language revitalization efforts by federally recognized Indian Tribes in Oregon.

I also urge you to fund the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), which helps ensure our youngest learners receive nutritious meals. Proactive investments in early childhood services can help break cycles of poverty and ensure long-term stability for children and families across Oregon, as well as the caregivers, providers and parents that nurture and educate them.

When we choose children, we improve people's lives and bend the cost curve on spending driven by crises. Prioritizing children builds a more just and promising future for all.

Sincerely,

*Zakiya Jackson*

Zakiya Jackson, MBA  
Associate Director of Development, Reach Out and Read

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