



NORTHWEST

April 3, 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 Melissa MacCumber. I live and work in Oregon's Senate District 9 and House District 18. 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. 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.

I first learned about Reach Out and Read as a nurse working with my youngest patients. They were so excited about their new book. As a former Title I ESOL teacher, this excitement inspired me to work for Reach Out and Read. I value this simple, effective model that leverages family/clinician relationships to boost early literacy and school readiness.

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 to you to ensure funding for early educator degree programs. This investment ensures education funding for traditionally underrepresented communities. When families can connect with trusted and trained community members, they have better outcomes in school and life. I saw this power firsthand teaching in the Salem-Keizer School District.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

Sincerely,

Melissa MacCumber

Melissa MacCumber, BA, LPN
Program Manager, Reach Out and Read

OREGON

P.O. Box 14461 | Portland, OR | 97293
971-287-6942
www.reachoutandread.org/oregon

WASHINGTON

2400 NW 80th Street #315 | Seattle, WA | 98117
206-524-3579
www.reachoutandread.org/washington