



*Create and nurture a loving and inclusive community
celebrating every person with Down syndrome.*

Hello,

I am writing on behalf of the Northwest Down Syndrome Association, an organization that serves hundreds of families around Oregon who have been touched by Down syndrome. Our families rely **on State and Federally mandated Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education (EI/ECSE) programs** to provide services critical to their children's development. With the help of EI/ECSE programs and involved, empowered parents, most children with Down syndrome arrive in school prepared to learn to read and write, and to participate in regular school activities. After school, individuals with Down syndrome are increasingly going on to live independent lives, and to hold jobs and contribute to society.

Early Intervention is critical to the success of these individuals and families, and unfortunately, **services to children age 0-3 have been cut by 48% since 2004, while services for children age 3-5 have been cut by 21%.** These significant cuts come at a time when demand for services is on the rise. **The current funding recommendation is only 66% of the funding needed to meet the actual cost of providing services.** While we work most closely with families touched by Down syndrome, these issues affect thousands of families across the state whose children experience different disabilities, and it is critical for all families that the **funding for Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education be increased at least \$10 million.**

We are aware of the challenges you face in attempting to provide funding to programs across the state. The long-term benefits of funding EI/ECSE are unquestionably worth the investment now. If we invest in our youngest children, the burden on the school system will be far less in 1-5 years when these students arrive in our public schools prepared to learn. The benefits of EI/ECSE have been well documented, and I hope you can take the time to seriously consider the reasons to increase funding to these services in this critical time. If you have questions or wish to discuss further, please contact NWDSA Executive Director Angela Jarvis-Holland at 503-238-0522.

Thank you,

Abigail Braithwaite

On behalf of the NWDSA Board of Directors

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