

Testimony for HB 2019 – April 11, 2019

From: Scott Overton Email: President@oregonpta.org; stjohnsvision@comcast.net

Dear Co-Chairs Roblan and Smith-Warner and respected committee members

Please accept this statement in support of HB 2019 to provide the success for students across Oregon. It is my personal opinion that education is the true equalizer for our society and by providing an excellent education to every child in the state and the country, we will begin to see great strides in equalizing the power of the state and nation across all ethnicities, social status and underrepresented groups of all types. Let me introduce myself. I am a 59 year old parent, self-employed Optometrist and small business owner in St Johns as well as a home owner in NE Portland. My twin boys are now 26 years old and attended public schools in Oregon from Kindergarten through high school and beyond.

This means that Oregon needs to provide an excellent education to every child in our state which is far from the reality of today due to the lack of the community to fund the programs required for our most needing and deserving children to fully attend and be involved in education through high school and beyond. Currently we have to make choices in our schools as to whether to fund strong academic programs and classes and have large class sizes or to limit our academic offerings to at least make classroom size and teacher work load manageable. This choice comes because we do not provide sufficient resources in funding to provide both strong academic programs and manageable class sizes. My children were lucky to attend school at Alameda Elementary school where the class size was rarely 25 kids during their time at Alameda and this was due to the ability for the school community to raise extra funds for staffing. This was not the case as they moved to middle school and high school. We saw class sizes easily of 30 in middle and high school and from this many children who were in need of extra time and care from the teaching staff found themselves to be failing and therefore less engaged and eventually either scraped by and graduated or dropped out usually to attend some alternative program or to get a GED. These were middle class kids with supportive homes and every societal reason to succeed in education. If we cannot even serve these kids who have had little extra trauma in their lives and have no need for wrap around services, it is no wonder that we cannot provide an excellent education to kids who come from and are simultaneously incurring traumatic life events and struggles beyond school to just attend and be involved.

Therefore I am fully in support of the extra funding to both provide increased classroom teachers to lower class sizes and to provide extra support for kids dealing with trauma in their lives so that they also will be ready to learn when they are attending school. Also effective interventions for students who traditionally have had less success in our school system are important but I must say that much money has been spent on specific interventions that have not proven to be effective. Therefore, finding and supporting efforts that actually lead to improved student success are important and should be considered when spending extra funds to special communities.

Thank you all for your time and consideration of this matter. We know that we can do a better job to provide an excellent education to all Oregon's children and this is a big step in that direction.

Sincerely, Scott Overton