

Dear Joint Committee on Student Success,

We've been underfunding our schools and shortchanging our students for decades. The time to act is now, and this is a landmark opportunity to do so. The Student Success Act, HB 3427, would give our students the resources they need and the high-quality education they deserve. The Student Success Act would create fairness in our tax system for the benefit of Oregon students. It prioritizes protecting small businesses, while also providing needed revenue for our schools and students. With measures to ensure funds are being spent wisely, HB 3427 is an accountable way to finally provide critical revenue for Oregon schools. This transformational investment in our schools will mean lower class sizes, increased graduation rates, expanded CTE programs and safer schools through more social-emotional learning. Please vote Yes for The Student Success Act, HB 3427.

Since this was all pre-written, I would like to add a personal note. At my elementary school, students really need social emotional support, but the teachers are all we have. There is a behavior specialist shared between three buildings, and a principal shared between two, so most of the day we are our own support. We need a counselor. We need people who are trained and qualified to help students who are dealing with crises and whose behaviors are preventing teachers and other students from reaching their goals. We don't have a PE teacher. Classroom teachers walk in and out of the gym with their students, scrambling to find equipment while the students are unmonitored in the gym. Since we don't have time to set up or put away before and after class, our students only get about 20 minutes of PE at a time. Teachers are already so overstretched with responsibilities that many of us don't have time to study PE standards and plan accordingly, so we just wing it. We don't have enough academic support. We have a number of students on IEPs who never get pulled out for support and never have anyone coming in to support them. Over half of our students do not meet grade-level in either reading or math. And every time teachers advocate for what our students need, we are shut down in the name of budget. We are failing our students. Teachers are doing our best to stand in the gap for them, but we are left powerless because we have no control over funding. We're not asking for more money for ourselves, even though we all know we work hard enough to deserve it. We're asking for staff, resources, and support. In the previous school I worked in, teachers weren't even provided with basic supplies except copy paper. I found myself, already financially burdened by debt, having to go out and buy tape, rulers, staplers, scissors, construction paper, glue, and a number of other things that an elementary teacher and students use on a regular basis. When somebody can't even afford to pay student loans that paid for the degree that made it possible to teach, the person should not also be expected to buy all of the supplies needed in the classroom. American students will never measure up to our high-performing neighbors until our government starts respecting our need to fund these things and address problems that are preventing students from being successful.

Regards,
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