

Greetings Legislators,

I am writing to you today because I am in full support of the HB 3427, and I urge you to be as well.  
Why?

I am a teacher in Oregon and a parent of school aged children. And I vote.

In my 13 years teaching in Oregon I have had the unique opportunity to work with two populations of students in Beaverton. Expelled students and homebound students. Both have significantly different needs, and I have seen our school system in Oregon fail them both because of the continued disinvestment in them.

First our expelled students. They are disproportionately male, Black or Hispanic and frequently come from homes that are struggling one way or another. Yes, they come to our program because they "have to", but many of them want to stay because for the first time they feel a connection to a trusted adult. They feel heard. At their previous school, teachers and staff are so overworked by crowding and lack of adequate funding that teachers and staff are unable to create meaningful relationships with all of their students often not with those with the greatest need. And research shows that relationships are the key to learning. The lack of investing in them as viable members of the community, resulting in giving them fewer supports to help them learn to be more productive for our state reinforces the message that they already know: that the system has given up on them. Why should they try to do better for themselves?

This lack of investing in education also affects the other group of students I have had the privilege to serve, homebound students. When I started this position 8 years ago, most of the students were recovering from surgery or cancer, but the past two-three years there has been a shift, now 75% of the students I work with have depression and/or anxiety. When these students felt they had connections and positive relationships with trusted adults in their home school, they were more able to manage their anxiety and find ways to continue to attend. However, with year after year of inadequate and unstable funding these students have also fallen through the cracks.

Students should never fall through the cracks.

Each one is valuable and can contribute to their communities. The fact that this current budget cut has resulted in our entire program being dismantled, not only has me sad for all of us who work there, but frustrated about the message being sent to these students again. The state doesn't care about you. You are not worth the investment.

That needs to end.

HB 3427 is a temporary fix, much appreciated and needed, but just a bandaid on a larger issue. Our state needs to fully invest in education. Every student in the state of Oregon needs to feel that they are worth the money and time. I show them this everyday by coming to work and supporting them. So I urge you to pass HB 3427 and tell them with your vote that they matter.

Thank you,  
Victoria Cato  
Bridges Academy  
Beaverton School District