



**Date:** March 31, 2021  
**To:** Education Subcommittee of Ways & Means, Co-chairs McLain and Frederick  
And Members  
**From:** Laurie Wimmer, OEA Government Relations  
**RE:** *SB 5513 [ODE Budget, specifically relating to JDEP funding]*

On behalf of OEA's 41,000 members, I am honored to testify in support of adequate and equity-based funding for our carceral students in the Juvenile Detention Education Program (JDEP). Given Oregon's deep commitment to equity for our most marginalized students, finally improving this line-item in the Oregon Department of Education's operations and grant-in-aid budget is imperative.

OEA supports a funding level of **\$5.4 million for the JDEP program** because we have watched as, year after year, the students in these programs around the state have faced insufficient educational programming due to chronic underfunding. Though our state requires that every public education student has a qualified teacher every day, this expectation cannot be met unless we fund that expectation. JDEP programs run a longer school year than district schools, yet we counterintuitively provide less, not more, funding for their educational support. This has been to the detriment of those who are arguably our most marginalized students – many navigating poverty, many on Individualized Education Plans, and many who are BIPOC students.

Though we generally support the ODE budget before you, we do urge you to fund this line-item at the full-funding level of \$5.4 million. OEA has participated for two years in a broad coalition supporting a greater commitment to these children than we have traditionally made. Now is the time: if we truly believe that every student deserves the best educational opportunities we can provide, irrespective of zip code or circumstance, then we must improve the funding level of this program once and for all. **It is the single most urgent equity action the 81<sup>st</sup> Legislative Assembly could take** to ensure a brighter future for our students.

We say we want to close the school to prison pipeline: here is a meaningful way to do it. Let's help these students achieve educationally even as they struggle with the circumstances that landed them in the JDEP system. This vastly increases the likelihood that they will never move to the adult corrections system and saves the state significant resources in the long run. Thank you for your strong support of this critical program.