

4/22/2021

Greetings Co-Chairs and Committee Members,

For the record, my name is Jennifer Scurlock, and I am a high school English teacher at Churchill High School in Eugene. As a proud public school teacher, I remember setting up my classroom 18 years ago, in great anticipation. I wanted to make sure that every student-- regardless of their race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender identity, physical ability, and religion-- felt welcomed in my classroom, and challenged as young scholars to grow into the individuals I knew they could be. However, throughout my professional career, I have witnessed how budget cuts devastate students, educators, and programs in our public schools.

Classrooms are filled beyond capacity with 30 to 40+ students in each class period. Educational assistants, which are a vital part of our schools, disappear and our students pay the price. Nurses are shared between three schools, which has become a shameful norm in our state. And the mental health workers and programs that we desperately need for students and families are stretched beyond capacity. This type of "erosion" within our K through 12 funding may not be fully understood by those who are not invested in public education, but the negative impact is both real and undeniable for educators who tirelessly work for students in our communities. This is why public educators, students, and families marched by the thousands in May of 2019. We advocate for our students because they matter, and we proudly advocate for public school budgets that are stable and adequate, because we know that when funds are taken out of our schools, our students and families suffer, and we cannot be silent.

In addition to the "no-cuts level" of \$9.6 billion dollars for the next biennium, the Legislature also needs to protect the ways our budget is distributed to our public schools and our Education Service Districts throughout the state. We must stop the efforts to remove public school funds and place them in for-profit virtual schools. And we need to provide greater equity to our students and families who are suffering from poverty. Many of our families who experience poverty have no voice, and we must make a firm stance to protect them and bring them no harm.

Thank you for your time this evening.

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