

Submitter: Benjamin Weintraub

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Education

Measure: HB5015

Dear Co-Chairs Frederick and McLain and Members of the Joint Ways and Means Education sub-committee,

My name is Ben Weintraub, and I'm a parent of two elementary-age Portland Public School students. I'm writing to urge you to support HB 5015, which will appropriate desperately-needed money from the state general fund to cover the needs of our state educational system.

Parents at my children's school (Glencoe elementary) have had to fight tooth and nail to get the staffing levels that our school needs to serve its students and families well, and I know from talking to other parents that we're not alone in PPS or in Oregon. The chronic underinvestment in public education within our state has left individual school communities fighting each other and their school boards over scraps, when we should be focused on providing the best possible education for all children in our state.

This scarcity inevitably leads to inequitable outcomes: the school communities with the most desperate staffing and funding needs correlate highly with those that have the least capacity to organize and advocate for that funding.

This scarcity also impacts students with special needs disproportionately. In PPS, we're already failing many of those students. I've watched the heartbreaking struggle of a neighboring family trying desperately to get some semblance of an education for their son with autism, only to run headlong into the completely inadequate special education staffing that PPS is able to provide. After two years of struggling with trying to get the system to provide the bare minimum that their son needed, they ended up leaving the state for Washington.

Continued under-investment in our statewide educational system will only worsen this trend of parents with the means to do so pulling their families out of the system, leading in turn to weakening public support for educational funding.

Take this opportunity to invest in our state's educational future. A 10.3 billion appropriation to the State School Fund is the minimum we need to simply maintain the current level of service (which as noted above, is still inadequate for far too many families).

Thank you for your time,

Ben Weintraub