

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

We are members of the Alameda Elementary PTA Executive Board, Alameda School Foundation Board, and Alameda Parent Equity Committee in Portland. Despite the fact that each group has a different focus in our work within our school community, we write to you today in unison and with solidarity. We are writing to urge you to establish a \$11.889 Billion appropriation to the State School Fund.

One of the core needs for any school to function at its best are dedicated and supported teachers, paraeducators, educational assistants, specialists, and support staff. It is unconscionable and irresponsible to allow these professionals to continue carrying class sizes or case loads which are unmanageable at a time when we still have so much work to do to help our students recover from the disruption of the pandemic. It will lead to continued burnout, shortages of qualified substitutes, and frequent turnovers in staffing at schools that would benefit the most from maintaining consistency. This is true whether we are speaking of schools in the largest districts in Oregon, or the smallest of communities. Teachers and staff do their work because of their passion for education and dedication to children. They deserve to be well-paid and have manageable class sizes. It is time our state made an appropriate investment in them, and that can only happen if you allocate enough funds.

The disruption of services that occurred because of the Covid-19 pandemic is showing to have had a huge effect on the mental health of our children of all ages. While educators and administration alike did their best to minimize damage, the cumulative effect of disrupted access to the social, developmental, and academic learning that happens within a school setting means that our children are suffering. As a result it is no surprise that there is an increase in behavioral challenges in classrooms and a decrease in feelings of safety. The legislature was able to acknowledge that increased mental and emotional health services were necessary before the pandemic and passed the Student Success Act. The severity of need has only increased since then. Oregon's students need more mental health support, more access to art, dance, music and physical education to keep them engaged in school, and smaller class sizes where individualized support can be offered to help them overcome the deficits and trauma incurred during the pandemic. How can we expect our children to get the support they so badly need without adequate investment from our state?

A survey of 40 school districts across Oregon conducted by The Oregon Association of Business Officials (OASBO) determined that a minimum of \$10.3 billion is necessary to maintain current service levels at public schools in our state, but maintaining the current service levels is not enough for the children of Oregon. More must be done. The 2022 Quality Education Measure (QEM), completed by the Quality Education Commission (QEC) estimates that a State School Fund investment of \$11.889 billion is necessary in order to achieve lasting education gains for ALL students. For more than 20 years our legislature has failed our students, and as a result our entire population, by choosing not to fund our schools according to the QEM. The kids

in our state need public schools that allow them to thrive, not merely get by. It is your responsibility to make sure this happens.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. We urge you to allocate \$11.889 billion to the State School Fund. Oregon's children need nothing less.

Sincerely,

The Alameda Elementary PTA Executive Board

The Alameda School Foundation Board

The Alameda Parent Equity Committee