

Submitter: Alyssa Potasznik  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means  
Measure: SB5506

My name is Alyssa Potasznik and I am a resident of Portland. I have taught special education in Texas and California for the past 13 years. Last year I was the special education department chair for my campus in Austin and was voted Teacher of the Year. I care deeply about public education and special education in particular. I've fought my entire career for students with disabilities and their families and my work reflects that.

I made the decision to leave Texas due to the abhorrent way it has failed to serve its students with disabilities over the years. I had no idea that coming to Oregon would thrust me into an even worse system.

My district lacks the basic continuum of special education services that students need in order to become happy, independent, self-actualized adults. I have never had so many students falling through the cracks, due to the lack of services, lack of staff, lack of expectations, lack of accountability, and so on.

The decisions that we make for our students directly impact the society that we live in. It is no wonder that as a city, and as a state, we struggle so mightily with issues like homelessness, drug addiction, and crime, when we have made the conscious decision to not serve our most vulnerable students.

I do not need a higher salary (thankfully), although our paraeducators certainly do. What I need is a robust special education system wherein our most marginalized students are given the care and the resources that they need, and are legally entitled to, in order to become the kind, compassionate, independent, self-actualized adults that they deserve to be.

Let's give all Oregon citizens the future they deserve. Let's build a community we're proud of. Let's be better than Texas.

Thank you.