

Submitter: Campbell Stewart  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means  
Measure: SB5506

I ask for your support in a no-cuts education budget. I am a school social worker for Beaverton High School. The U.S. Surgeon General, Dr. Murthy issued a rare public health advisory on the growing mental health crisis among children, adolescents, and young adults on December 6, 2021. We are only seeing this mental health crisis grow day to day. We need to at least stay funded at the current rate to be able to keep students minimally supported with their social emotional needs.

I am strongly concerned about what will happen to our Black, Latinx, Indigenous and other students of color if our state budget is reduced. For our homeless students, our newcomer students, our low-income students, and/or our lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer and gender expansive students. I am concerned for all of our students who are still navigating their way through the effects of years of isolation and academic and social delays due to the epidemic. We cannot abandon them now, foolishly thinking the pandemic's effects are behind us.

We are rarely able to find a child or adolescent outpatient community therapists with immediate openings. Many kids are on wait lists that are weeks and months long. In a child's lifespan that is too long to be waiting for mental health support. I can't imagine how much worse our kid's mental health will be if they can't access trained behavioral health professionals at school because our schools weren't properly funded. We work closely with students who are experiencing suicidal and homicidal ideation, bringing them in closer to circles of support as research has shown the impact of isolation and othering of these students is associated with more violence and harm. We need our social workers to tend to these students in crisis. One hour of therapy a week is often not enough for these young people and they depend on routine support with their school social workers for connection and support. Our schools will be less safe without this critical web of support.

Our student's social emotional health is directly proportional to their academic success. We need you to prioritize a \$10.3 billion minimum in the State School Fund to show that you value our students, families, and communities across Oregon."