

Angela Bonilla
HB 3221 Testimony
4/18/2023

Hello Chair Nathanson, Vice-Chairs Reschke and Walters, and members of the House Committee on Revenue. My name is Angela Bonilla and I am proud to represent the 4400 Educators as President of the Portland Association of Teachers. When I am not on release I am a Spanish Immersion Teacher by trade and instructional Coach at Scott Elementary School.

I'm here today to ask for your support of House Bill 3221, which will allow PPS to maintain the revenue it raises and provide the district with a tool to raise much-needed additional revenue for our schools.

Local option levies present an option for raising additional operating funds from property taxes for school districts, subject to approval of local voters. Local option levies tax the gap between the assessed value and the real market value of a property. When the economy is strong, the gap widens, creating more opportunity to raise local option revenue, particularly in inflationary times like these.

Levies are used to help pay for the day-to-day operations of a school district. Levies can pay for staff, programs and services that are either not funded or are not fully funded by the state of Oregon. If a proposed levy passes, 100% of the funds could be used to pay for teacher salaries in the district. No additional funding source for staff positions is available to the district.

However, state statute limits the amount of revenue school districts can collect from a local option levy and PPS is on the verge of exceeding the statutory limit during the next levy renewal. This leaves us attempting to do more with less as we try to serve over 43,000 students within our Public School system.

PPS's local option dollars have a very real impact on our system. In the FY 2021-22, for example, local option dollars supported approximately **860 teaching positions**.

Schools run on people — educators and principals, but also bus drivers, custodians, educational assistants and our lunch ladies and “food dudes” as I've heard them lovingly called.. Educators and staff are the heart of our schools, cultivating stable and healthy learning environments, providing more instructional support to students, and meeting students' mental and behavioral health needs.

Given the challenges our education systems face, it's more important than ever that we give school districts the tools to raise additional funds to support teachers and ensure that students have the highest quality of education possible.

I would be doing a disservice to my members if I did not mention the longstanding impacts of measures 5, 25 and 50, which capped property taxes dedicated for school funding, Required a supermajority for new revenue, and Reduced property taxes and limited their future growth,

respectively. As I shared, there is no additional funding source for staff positions available to the district, as our legislature has yet to fund the State School Fund at the levels indicated by the Quality Education Commission. Until we radically-- and I'm using the original Latin meaning for radical, which means "at the root"-- reform the way our State uses tax revenue to fully fund schools, districts are left with no option but to propose levies to the public. We are asking that y'all allow us to raise as much as we can from the members of our community until our state can restructure our funding process.

Our organizers (who are full time teachers and volunteer with PAT) met with families, educators and community members recently as we discussed alternative ways to Fully Fund Schools across the state to Quality Education Model. I shared that according to Mark Brenner from University of Oregon's Labor and Research Center (LERC), 22% of the benefits from the estimated Share of Kicker for 2021-23 will go to the top 1% of Oregon's population. That is, individuals with an adjusted gross income over \$481 thousand. That is more than I will ever see as an educator serving our future legislators, athletes, doctors, lawyers, service workers and residents of our state.

Now, because I'm a bit of a Data nerd, I will share some interesting facts:

For the 2021-2023 biennium, the state school fund was \$9.3 Billion. The difference between the State School Fund budget and the Quality Education Model (QEM) was \$557 Million. That same biennium, the kicker was a total of \$3.938 Billion. The State School Fund lost \$1.236 Billion to the kicker over this same biennium. For our school district in Portland alone, that is a loss of \$70.81 Million.

For the upcoming biennium, the State School Fund for 2023-2025 is projected to be \$9.9 Billion. The QEM for this same biennium is \$11.889 Billion. The QEM shortfall is \$1.989 Billion. In the last biennium, we returned an estimated \$8.536 Billion to the top 1% of earners, folks who have an Adjusted Gross Income of over \$481,000. **With the kicker that the top 1% of Oregonians received, we could have funded the QEM shortfall 4 times over.** Respectfully, It is WILD to me that we literally collect enough revenue as a state and instead of future proofing ourselves, we send it back to those who earn over \$481k per year. Individuals in the top 1% of the income distribution will receive an average rebate of \$44,618 compared to the typical (median) Oregonian who will receive \$975. By comparison, our lunch ladies and food dudes earn \$14.40/hour, a yearly salary of slightly over \$29,000. Our educational assistants start at \$15.94/hour, a yearly salary of slightly over \$32,000. We cannot maintaining staffing without an increase in wages and staff, which we cannot do without an increase in funding.

As a labor union, we will always fight for accountability of public funds and appropriate spending to serve the direct service of students. That, to us, also includes hiring more than one "blinds" guy, so we can ensure every school has operational blinds to use during lockdowns, or having more than a handful of skilled tradespeople to deal with the HVAC units in our sites to help us mitigate temperatures over 80 and under 60 degrees in our schools. However, we cannot win the schools our students deserve without adequate funding.

Please support House Bill 3221 and allow school districts to raise local option levies that can support our teachers. Until we create a more sustainable statewide system for funding our schools, this is our next, best option (no pun intended).

Thank you.