

Submitter: Brian Grass
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure: SB5506

Esteemed Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony advocating that public education be robustly funded in the 2023-2025 budget, with no cuts to the existing level of funding.

As a concerned parent of a third grader and an incoming kindergartener in Portland Public Schools, I am constantly constantly confronted with the tremendous needs of students in this post-pandemic environment and the harsh reality that schools are underfunded to meet these needs. Since my student was in the middle of kindergarten when schools were shuttered for the COVID pandemic, I have experienced first-hand the learning deficits and difficulty readjusting to a classroom environment that resulted from that challenging period. I hear on an almost daily basis how other students who are experiencing behavioral issues have disrupted my child's class, been asked to leave, or been allowed to disengage from learning because the teacher does not have the capacity to address their challenges and teach the class. My heart goes out to these students and for their classmates who are also losing out. Next year, even without state budget cuts, my student's class size is projected to go up to 30 students and their school continues to lose teaching positions. I struggle to imagine how the students and teachers are going to cope next year with so little support and it breaks my heart. We can and must do better!

I am an Oregon native and a product of Oregon public schools. I have long been dismayed with the underinvestment in and lackluster performance of Oregon's schools in national rankings, and the lasting effects of the pandemic have raised the stakes tremendously. So many kids are truly hurting and their futures are being jeopardized by underinvestment in public schools. I urge you make every effort to fund our schools as generously as possible. There truly is no more important investment that the Legislature can make than in the education of the next generation of Oregonians.

Thank you so much for your consideration and service to our state.