

May 3, 2023

Joint Committee on Ways and Means

Sen. Elizabeth Steiner

Rep. Tawna Sanchez, Co-Chair

Co-Chairs Steiner and Sanchez and Honorable Committee Members:

To the Joint Ways and Means Committee Chair, Co-Chair, and Members:

My name is Everice Moro, and I am a member of the Retired Oregon School Employees. I was a student, 40+ years as an educational employee, a parent of four, and a grandparent of six who have all been in Oregon's school system. I can tell you frankly that we have witnessed, participated in and been a victim of the loss of educational and employment opportunities because of a continual school funding crisis.

How schools are funded has changed over my 74 years, but it continues to dominate Oregon education realities. Political action throughout the years from the National Defense Education Act in 1957, Measure 5 in 1990, the Quality Education Model in 1999, No Child Left Behind and the recent Student Success Act plus a multitude of other plans have continuously failed to provide enough funding to sustain public education in Oregon.

There are, according to the oregon.gov website, 1200 K-12 schools, 197 districts, thousands of school employees and over 500,000 students plus parents in Oregon public schools. They all deserve our best.

People accept and stay in classified jobs because we care about kids, and we not only want those individual students to be safe and successful, but for *Oregon* to be safe and successful. To make sure we're on a successful path together, we need:

1. A \$10.3 billion appropriation for the State School Fund (SSF) this session, and
2. Meaningful investments in the education workforce – including:
  - Higher quality jobs that have Just Cause in the employment agreement,
  - Funding for recruitment and retention of classified employees to have five-hour minimum workdays or at least a 20% SPED differential,
  - Funding for the currently required de-escalation training and incident reports for classified staff who support special education students,
  - Funding for culturally appropriate early childhood literacy

Oregon students deserve a \$10.3 billion budget for the SSF. It is the essential, core funding for all our public-school districts. It funds the *essential* work of Oregon public education. It is the

lifeblood that supports what classified employees are doing for Oregon students every day. We are the first to enter the building and the last to leave each night, to achieve our goal – Oregon's goal – to support all of Oregon's students.

This profound underfunding results in devastating effects, which were multiplied by the pandemic and showed everyone how vital schools and staff are to our children and our communities. Education employees have been underpaid and overworked and are leaving the profession. You must have the right staffing to provide the services. As a result, parents are pulling their students out of public school and turning to private and online providers. That further complicates the educational picture.

Our goal as a state for an educated populus should be to provide the best education for ALL students in every community and to honor all the people who provide that educational service with a livable wage. Schools provide not only education, but safety, security and other necessary services. You cannot continue to provide less and less and expect education to work. The right thing to do is fully fund a public education system in Oregon that is for everyone and provides for the future of our children and our state.

Thank you for your time. I am happy to answer any questions.

Everice Moro

Portland