

- Chair Neron, members of the committee. For the record my name is Laurie Beitzel, I am a special education teacher here in the Salem area, and I am here today in support of HB 4079.
- I currently support 37 students with case management as well as teaching academics, social skills, and behavior support. I have 8 incoming kindergarten students who I will support during their transition, 5 recently added in evaluations and anticipate at least 4 more added by the end of the year. My caseload is still smaller than many of my peers. These students have disabilities from 9 of the 13 eligibility categories.
- With the support of 1 full time IA and 3 quarter time IA's I am narrowly meeting their needs and legally required meetings. I do all of this not just because it is in my job but because it is what my special education students deserve and are legally required to have under IDEA.
- But let's not just focus on the support I give -Lets talk about the supports our students deserve. For the 21-22 school year, ODE reported that out of roughly 38,000 , 17.12 % received special education. Based on the current weights up to 11% that Oregon allows, that means that 6 percent or about 2400 students did not receive additional funding for their special ed services.
- As you can tell, my students have needs well beyond accommodations to access general education. To put into perspective, I currently have a student that requires the aid of a full time instructional assistant, it took us three years to meet this need due to budget and staffing issues, likely due to the lack of financial support by the state. Additionally, our students who need specialized placement is increasing each year yet our funding to build these classrooms is not.
- Our state has special education students that need specially designed instruction and services specific to their disabilities. They need to be taught social skills, time and care to work through how their disability affects their learning, individual seating options and care from Occupational therapists, nursing care, deaf and hard of hearing specialists, vision support specialists. How can districts possibly continue to support our students if we only receive funding for a portion of our special education students?

- Our district is in a financial crisis and yet our state is not putting the needs of our most vulnerable population first. Without the additional funding, our district struggles to find dollars to support our special education students and staff. We are constantly understaffed leading to stressors that are pushing amazingly talented and caring teachers into other professions and denying the services our students require.
- So which students does the district choose? How does the district pay for the needs of these students? Does the district simply take their money received by the state and spread it across all students with special education needs? I understand many of these questions are meant for the district level, but these types of hard decisions are being made due to the lack of financial support from our state.
- Lastly, when you have a friend or family member with a student in special ed, and they ask about state funding, how will you explain to them that as a state we feel that paying for only a percentage of our students is adequate.
- Our special education students and educators can not wait anymore. We desperately need you to pass HB 4079, and fund the additional weights it creates, if we have any hope to provide the education all these wonderful students deserve. Thank you!