

Hello, Chair Neron, Vice-Chairs Dobson and McIntire, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Amanda Orozco, and I have had the honor of serving on the Gresham-Barlow School Board. I am also a substitute teacher. **When people have asked me what I think the biggest equity issue in Oregon public schools is, I've always said: funding for how we support and take care of our SpEd students.**

As someone who has worked in classrooms, I've seen firsthand how much our teachers and school staff pour their hearts into supporting our SpEd students. These educators go above and beyond to meet the needs of students with disabilities, ensuring they receive the care and attention they deserve. But, despite their dedication, it's often the lack of funding that holds us back from providing the comprehensive services these students need.

There is so much intersectionality in supporting SpEd students. Whether it's disability, race, or socio-economic background, these complexities rarely get the attention they deserve. It hurts my heart to see our most vulnerable students left out of the conversation. These children are often left behind because the jobs that should support them don't pay enough, and schools are overwhelmed by the needs of SpEd programs.

SpEd students are not burdens. They are not financial afterthoughts. They are human beings with immense potential and the lack of funding is a huge factor holding them back from thriving in our schools. We must do better by them.

That's why I am testifying in support of HB 2953. This bill is a critical step forward to helping schools receive the necessary resources to adequately support our SpEd students. I want to thank Representative Neron and all the other sponsors for bringing this issue to the forefront, and **I strongly encourage the Oregon Legislature to support this bill. Our students deserve a fair chance to succeed, and adequate funding is the key to making that happen.**

Thank you for your time and consideration.