

Testimony in Support of House Bill 2448

Submitted by: Amanda Orozco

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

My name is Amanda Orozco, and I am here today to express **my strong support for House Bill 2448**, which seeks to increase funding for students eligible for special education, particularly through enhanced support for the High Cost Disabilities Account.

I have witnessed firsthand the incredible dedication and effort that school staff put into supporting our students with disabilities, having served as a substitute teacher in Oregon's schools. Every day, I saw educators, staff, and administrators pouring their hearts into taking care of our SpEd students. Yet, time and again, the one factor that limits their ability to provide the support these students need is funding.

Special education is not a luxury; it is a necessity. The needs of our students with disabilities are complex, and it is simply unacceptable to continue underfunding the resources required to support them properly. These students are not burdens, and they are certainly not an afterthought. They are individuals with immense potential, and they deserve the same opportunities to thrive as any other student in Oregon's public schools.

When I served on the Gresham-Barlow School Board, people would often ask me what the biggest equity issue in Oregon's public schools was. Without hesitation, I would always say that it is how we treat and take care of our SpEd students. There is so much intersectionality in equity when it comes to supporting these students, and it is too often left out of the conversation.

It breaks my heart to see our most vulnerable students, those who can't always advocate for themselves, continue to fall behind due to insufficient resources. Their potential to succeed shouldn't be determined by the limitations of funding, and I believe this bill takes a critical step toward changing that.

House Bill 2448 offers a significant boost to the resources available for students with disabilities, which is long overdue. I commend Rep. Neron for bringing this forward, and I sincerely hope the committee will prioritize this bill and show strong support for our SpEd students. It is time that we provide them with the funding and resources they truly deserve. I hope that we continue to support these vulnerable students even more so in the future.

Thank you for your time and consideration.