

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

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to making sure every child gets the education and support they deserve in Oregon.

As a retired public schools' educator and concerned citizen of Multnomah county, I am writing to you today. to advocate for the passage of HB 2953 and legislation that fully funds special education services. I am also with the Sacred Organizing Coalition, whose organizations and initiatives share a commitment to organizing the hundreds of community-based teams we work with - and the thousands of everyday Oregonians that are part of these local groups - to move us toward an Oregon where all belong.

I am a retired teacher, K12 administrator and Assistant Director of Equity. Adequate funding for students with special needs is central to addressing equity in education. Adequate funding supports important social development resulting in a decrease in school absenteeism and disciplinary issues. Students are more fully integrated into the school community when their educational and social development needs are met.

I believe that every student in Oregon deserves the support they need. I believe that teachers and staff should be equipped with the resources necessary for every child to succeed.

But because of an outdated funding formula designed over 30 years ago, Oregon is currently leaving out over 19,000 students or almost 1/4th of the 80,000 students in its funding. That's even though the need has drastically increased for special education services, with diagnoses for those with autism or anxiety and children with other needs continuing to rise.

Doing nothing means young people not getting basic support for their needs. It means more teachers and staff burnout from not having enough resourcing. Underfunded mandates mean local schools having to choose cuts in various programs. Doing nothing affects all of us.

We cannot just let an old law from the 1990s dictate whose children get to belong in Oregon schools. As an educator who knows the importance of supporting our children in my community, all of our children belong here. Our funding should reflect this truth.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration,

Cynthia A. MacLeod

Principal, retired PPS