

Submitter: Christopher Buckingham

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Education

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2953

I am a parent of a 3rd grade student in Portland Public Schools. He started in Kindergarten the first year schools had opened after the pandemic. He had an IEP in place - transferred from an IFSP (Autism qualification), though in addition he has since been diagnosed with ADHD and Anxiety. He excels at Math and is in the 99th percentile (TAG). His first 3 years at PPS were challenging. Even though he had a SPED teacher checking on him, the overcrowded classrooms (30 + kids in his first-grade class) led to multiple incidents which the school suspended my son. We received many explanations for the reasoning, but it was clear the real reason was they had no other recourse. This was difficult for our son's esteem and for us, two working parents, to take time off because the school did not have enough resources. Things did get better - he was assigned a paraeducator and his second and third grade teacher seem to have a better understanding of neurodiversity. He stopped being suspended and started engaging in school. We were lucky. The difficulties in his first years put him behind in reading... which he has been working especially hard to make up. He's gone from being years behind, to at / above his grade level and he continues to work at it. My son's disability is invisible - aside from various ticks and stims, he seems like a very normal, smart, funny kid. He has benefitted from SPED services and I know the system could have done better with more resources. When special-ed kids do better, the rest of the classroom does better as well. My son has a lot to offer. I hope this legislation passes. Thank you.