

Submitter: Chris Bekemeier
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2953
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 parent of two students who benefited from PPS kindergarten through high school, I am writing 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.

My younger son has experienced mental health challenges. Thanks to special education support services, he is a capable young adult with a decent job as a transporter at OHSU. Without this support, I cannot imagine where he would be today.

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But because of an outdated funding formula designed over 30 years ago, Oregon is currently leaving out over 19,000 students or almost 1/4th of the 80,000 students in its funding.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 let an old law from the 1990s dictate whose children get to belong in Oregon schools. It is our responsibility to support all children in our community. Our funding should support ALL of our children. Please support HB 2953 and remove the cap so that funding will be available for all students who qualify.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration,

Chris Bekemeier, parent and community member