

February 17, 2025
Oregon State Legislature
House Committee on Education
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE:

1) HB 2953, to remove cap on state funding for special education (SPED) students

Dear Committee Members:

My name is Felisa Salvago-Keyes and I am a community member and a parent of a child served by SPED services at Whitman Elementary in Portland, OR. I am writing in support of HB 2953.

According to Portland Public Schools, 17% of their students receive SPED services, yet the funding cap is currently at 11%. This underfunding not only affects students entitled to SPED services, but all students in our community. Time and attention inevitably is given to SPED students, whether or not budgeted, which leads to time and attention taken from other students. Yet this time and attention is not fairly compensated and is not afforded the planning and energy it deserves. This gap can lead to a patchwork nature in services that risks diminishing their quality.

I have seen the difference quality SPED support makes first hand. My son is in first grade at Whitman Elementary and is autistic. While he is in a mainstream class most of the time, he struggles if he is not given more one to one support. When he did not have this support, because of limited resourcing, his behavior prevented him from learning; he could not even be graded because he could not complete much work. But even beyond this, his behavior disrupted the whole class.

The school had to shuffle resources, likely away from other children, to give my son the attention he needs. But this attention has made all the difference. He is now learning more than ever and is at grade level in most of his subjects. We no longer receive calls that he has acted out physically in class. The SPED team does such valuable work and ensures the whole school community grows to their potential. But I know they make tradeoffs in how they support SPED students. They deserve adequate funding.

Please **vote to support HB 2953**. Thank you very much for your consideration and service to our community.

Sincerely,

Felisa Salvago-Keyes
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