

Submitter: Daniel Levine

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Education

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2953

My name is Daniel Levine, and I am the parent of a 5 year old who attends Bridlemile Elementary in SW Portland. I am writing this testimony in support of HB295 because the need for funding for kids with special needs has increased while the budget to support that need has remained static or decreased over time.

Just a few months ago my wife and I weren't sure our son could participate in school at all, as his level 3 autism requires substantial care and supervision. We are lucky in that our local school has sufficient support staff and resources for his Communication and Behavior classroom, and this has allowed him to flourish at school. The changes and improvement in our child's development during his limited time in the school system has shown us how important it is to have a proper environment and team in place. We see the importance of having a space that cares for, supports and educates in a public school setting so that kids from all walks of life and all neighborhoods can benefit - not just families that have the time and resources for private care.

I am writing this because I know that many other schools in the city don't have the resources to have sufficient support staff or dedicated classrooms for special education. Upwards of 17% of kids in Portland Public Schools need support services through special education, yet the spending cap remains at 10%. It is important that in this climate of spending cuts in the school system that our most vulnerable students are not left behind. Thank you.