

Submitter: Miranda Bermes  
On Behalf Of: Sacred Organizing Coalition  
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 concerned Oregonian and community leader of Hood River, 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. As someone who struggled in a traditional school environment and was thus pulled from public schools in order to have my needs met via home schooling, I know just how imperative it is that our schools be properly funded in order to meet the varying needs of all students. Not every family is equipped to provide specialized support for their child's learning, and it is our responsibility as a community to ensure that every child who attends a public school be given equitable, not just equal, resources and support for their specific educational needs in order to give all children a chance at a future in which they thrive.

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But because of an outdated funding formula designed over 30 years ago, Oregon is currently leaving out over 19,000 students or almost 1/4th of the 80,000 students in its funding.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 a community leader who knows the importance of supporting our children in my community, all of our children belong here. They are our hope for the future, and it is our responsibility to equip them all with the support they need. Our funding should reflect this truth.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration,  
Rev. Miranda P. Bermes