

Submitter: Luhui Whitebear

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Education

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2953

As prepared for verbal testimony before time ran out:

Good afternoon Chair Neron, Vice-Chairs Dobson and McIntire, and members of the committee.

My name is Luhui Whitebear. I serve as chair of the Corvallis School Board, Region 10 (Linn, Benton, Lincoln) representative on the Oregon School Board Association board of directors, and the president of the Oregon School Board Member of Color Caucus. I also have a child with autism that slipped through the cracks and did not have access to special education services until this year. I am here today to strongly support House Bill 2953, to remove the percentage cap used for amount of moneys that are distributed from the State School Fund to school districts for students eligible for special education as a child with a disability.

In learning more about special education in our region, I have noticed how much the current 11% cap is not adequate. In our local district in Corvallis, we are at 15% of students accessing special education, which is also the state average. Other districts in our region are at 19-21%. Services do not stop at 11% as these students need support. However, resources are spread thin and can lengthen the time until assessments are made as well as impact the level of services received once they are received. For example, in advocating for my own child, the wait time was three months before an assessment could even be completed. And this was after several years of advocating for a referral. In the meantime, my child was not receiving the support she needed to help her learn more effectively. And there are other families in similar situations all over Oregon. They deserve better, and their children with disabilities of all types deserve better.

Removing the percentage cap is removing barriers for school districts in serving students with disabilities and supporting their success in our public schools. I strongly urge you to support House Bill 2953. Thank you for your time.