

Submitter: Dawn Watson

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Education

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2953

Testimony in Support of House Bill 2953
Presented to the House Education Committee
February 17, 2025

Good Afternoon Chair Neron, Vice Chair Dobson, Vice Chair McIntire, and Members of the House Education Committee,

My name is Dawn Watson, I'm a Phoenix-Talent Schools board member. I'm currently the Vice President of the OSBA Board of Directors, and, most importantly, a parent with a child who was on an IEP. I'm here to urge you to support House Bill 2953 and lift the special education funding cap.

The 1991 special education funding cap hasn't been updated despite changes like Oregon's 2019 expansion of autism and developmental delay qualifications, increased societal acceptance, and greater support demands from students.

In Phoenix-Talent, 17% of our students qualify for special education services, which is 6% above the current cap. By lifting this cap, we could better serve our students by:

Providing more aides

Offering more time for specialized instruction

Making necessary IEP adjustments

Implementing push-in supports to help children stay in the classroom with their peers

Lifting the cap would foster a more inclusive educational environment, closing gaps with the goal of having more students receive a standard diploma rather than modified diplomas or graduation certificates. This would prepare those on IEPs for college and careers, thus creating brighter futures for them and their families. I've witnessed this impact firsthand with my son, Keenan, who was initially on track for a modified diploma but, thanks to dedicated support, graduated with a standard diploma, opening doors we never thought possible. Every child deserves this opportunity to aim high, but without adequate funding, I fear this will not happen.

Please support House Bill 2953 to open possibilities for Oregon's children and ensure they receive the resources they need to thrive.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Dawn Watson
School Board Member, Phoenix-Talent School District
Vice President, OSBA Board of Directors