

Support for HB 2953

Removing the cap on special education

Chair Neron, Vice-chairs Dobson and McIntire, Committee members

For the record, my name is Robin Roemer, Vice President for Legislation, speaking on behalf of the Oregon PTA. We represent families across the state of both general and special education students. For over 125 years we have advocated for children here in Oregon and our members volunteer in schools in many districts to this day and recognize how we can and should better serve students.

We support all three bills (HB 2682, HB 2448, and HB 2953) that are being heard today.

In regards to HB 2953 we want to briefly highlight three points.

One, the cap needs to be lifted. The idea that some kids count and others don't is impossible to reconcile with our values as PTA and hopefully of us as a state.

Two, while this bill discusses weights and per student funding, it's important to remember **SpEd expenditures actually can't always be tied to specific students.** Some of the many urgent asks that we have heard from our families reflect more overarching needs:

- better training on disabilities for GenEd teachers
- inclusive learning environments
- reducing staff turnover particularly in SpEd.

Also, **IEPs will always be an imperfect measure of student needs.** Not all students that could or should have an 504 or IEP have one at this moment, for various reasons:

- The length of the process to establish an IEP once a potential disability is identified,
- insufficient screening of students to begin with, for example for dyslexia,
- or lastly, reluctance on part of the parents be it because of the fear of perceived stigma or generational distrust of the educational and medical system.

Three, we need additional funding. Currently it is the school districts that step up as the state and the federal government do not do their part in adequately funding special education. It's the school districts that pull resources from all corners of their budgets to serve our SpEd students.

We believe it is time to change that story, you, the state legislature can become the hero for our families and children by championing fully funding special education in the state of Oregon.

Please vote yes on HB 2935, 2448, and 2682. Thank you.

Robin Roemer, VP for Legislation, Oregon PTA