

Feb 14, 2025

Oregon House Education Committee  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Neron, Vice-Chairs Dobson and McIntire, and Members of the House Education Committee,

On behalf of the Forest Grove School District, we are writing to express our strong support for three critical pieces of legislation: House Bill 2953 to increase the special education funding cap, House Bill 2448 to fully fund high-cost disabilities, and House Bill 2682 to adequately fund Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education (EI/ECSE). Each of these bills is essential to ensuring that our students with disabilities receive the high-quality education and services they deserve.

Every day, school districts face tough choices to address funding gaps caused by state-imposed caps on special education funding, forcing us to stretch limited resources across many essential student programs. We do this because every student matters. Fully funding special education is about equity—aligning resources with real needs to ensure every child, regardless of ability, has access to a safe, welcoming, and enriching education. It means doing what's right for students without sacrificing the programs that help all students thrive.

### **Increasing the Special Education Funding Cap (HB 2953)**

In the Forest Grove School District, we believe it is our responsibility—and our privilege—to support every student with the services they need to thrive. But Oregon's current 11% cap on special education services—far below the state and national average of 15%—creates significant funding gaps that force districts to make impossible choices. Every year, our district must redirect \$1.59 million from our general fund to cover these essential services.

### **Fully Funding High-Cost Disabilities (HB 2448)**

We are honored to serve students with complex and high-cost disabilities—children who inspire us every day with their resilience, courage, and determination. These students require specialized, intensive services that go far beyond the support typical funding can provide. Yet each year, we face a \$3.2 million shortfall in our high-cost disability budget, forcing us to stretch resources and make difficult choices to ensure every student receives what they need.

### **Adequately Funding Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education (HB 2682)**

Early intervention changes lives. It's a chance to meet children where they are, at the very beginning of their learning journey, and give them the tools they need to grow and thrive. Early Intervention has been



shown to enhance social-emotional skills, promote school readiness, and strengthen family relationships contributing to a child’s mental health and overall success in adulthood. Additionally, 1 in 3 infants and toddlers who received Early Intervention services did not later present with a disability or require special education<sup>1</sup>. Funding EI/ECSE will give our youngest learners the foundation they need to thrive—because they can and they will, with the right support.

If funded as proposed, the Forest Grove School District would realize an estimated \$4.8 million increase that would be reinvested in evidenced-based classroom interventions such as high-dosage tutoring and instruction, robust multi-tiered systems of support, and improvement of instructional practices<sup>2</sup>. We urge you to support HB 2953, HB 2448, and HB 2682.

Thank you for your leadership and dedication to Oregon’s public schools.

Sincerely,

Kristy Kottkey  
Chair, Forest Grove School Board

Dr. Suzanne West  
Superintendent, Forest Grove School District

<sup>1</sup>*What Is Early Intervention and Why Is It Important*, Utah State University, [idrpp.usu.edu/files/policy/what-is-EI-why-important-for-web.pdf](http://idrpp.usu.edu/files/policy/what-is-EI-why-important-for-web.pdf). Accessed 14 Feb. 2025.

<sup>2</sup>Visible Learning. (2017). *Hattie ranking: 252 influences related to student achievement*. Visible Learning. <https://visible-learning.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/VLPLUS-252-Influences-Hattie-ranking-DEC-2017.pdf>

