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On Behalf Of:  
Committee: House Committee On Revenue  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2953

Members of the Revenue Committee:

As parents to a child with disabilities that qualifies for an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), we have seen firsthand how money spent on services, accommodations and trained personnel affects children with disabilities. Research shows that front-loading quality education from trained teaching staff results in higher levels of independence in our children who struggle to access their education due to their neuro and physical diversity. Children with disadvantages such as being disabled, benefit more from smaller schools, smaller class sizes and more highly trained teachers than typically developing children do. All these things cost money.

Oregon is one of the few states that caps the percentage for special education funding so low. This policy indicates that the state is more fearful of districts taking advantage of funding than it is concerned with providing full funding to its diverse and vulnerable students. Our state continues to do this even while knowing there are very few districts at or below the 11% threshold, which means the state is knowingly withholding funding from our disabled students.

All students receive general education funding. Students with disabilities need access to greater funding to access their learning goals—to which they have a legal right. HB 2953 ensures that all students receive the resources they need to succeed. Special education students have the same needs as their typically developing peers—access to their education. All students benefit from appropriately funded, well supported learning environments. When schools have the appropriate staffing, services and training to meet diverse learning needs, every student benefits from more individualized attention and better equipped teachers that support success for all.

We believe the measure of a society is how we treat our vulnerable. Let Oregon legislators show their populace that we care for our most vulnerable not only because it benefits everyone by having more independent, higher functioning disabled citizens, but also because we value all humans—no matter how abled or developmentally capable they are.

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