

Submitter:

Mitzi Bauer

On Behalf Of:

Committee:

House Committee On Revenue

Measure, Appointment or Topic:

HB2953

Vice Chair Nathanson, Vice Chair Walters, Vice Chair Reschke, and Members of the House Revenue Committee,

As a member of the North Clackamas school board, a passionate and active advocate for public schools for many years, I want every student to be successful. I'm writing in support of 2 bills: HB 2953A, which removes the cap on special education funding and HB 2448A which increases the high disability grant. I want to thank you for your work on this important committee and vote to advance these bills by adding the necessary resources for our students and staff to be successful.

Origin of cap is 1991 (34 years old law) and was the average when the cap was put in place yet not updated to reflect the changing state and national average. ODE data shows that up to a quarter of special needs students are NOT counted in the weighting formula that provides additional SPED funds. Why is this group not fully funded as no other group is capped? It forces districts to pull from other educational services or cutting. In only 29 of the state's 197 districts do special needs account for less than 11% of enrollment.

In the North Clackamas School District with an enrollment of approximately 17000 students, with an average rate 17% qualifying for services, and one school with a rate of 22%, this leaves 1020 students being covered by our school fund at 1.0 weighing average. This underfunded mandate along with the under reimbursement for high-cost disability expenses results in nearly \$1.9 M in unfunded expenses for students receiving high-cost services as outlined in their Individual Education Plan. Reimbursement rates over time have decreased from 70% to 40%. Why are these students not receiving the funds they need while a \$5.6 kicker returned to Oregonians last year.

Recruitment and retention of staff is very difficult for the highly specialized and demanding work. More needed staff and professional development would give all of our students the support they deserve; helping all students learn. Our staff is experiencing burnout with the high number of students with multiple needs in large class sizes, large amount of paperwork. You are always welcome to visit our schools and observe our dedicated staff at work.

Please remove the cap and provide the resources (no carveout) that are needed for both of these bills; especially at this time of unknown future supports from federal programs.

I urge you to support both HB 2953A & HB 2448A.

Sincerely,

Mitzi Bauer, North Clackamas school volunteer & board member