

Submitter: Daedra Buntin
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee
On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5515

Thank you for your time and attention to this very important topic. Not only do I write to you today as an employee of a public school district, but also as a parent of a student who required special education services with an IEP throughout their entire educational career, as well as therapeutic services and additional support in general education classes. My daily work is focused on the management of risk, health, and safety, and I see firsthand the outcomes of underfunded and subsequently understaffed schools, programs, and departments.

Many students benefit from access to IEPs and 504 plans. While these services may be short-term for some, others require them throughout their entire school career. Regardless of the level of student need, schools must assess each student individually to identify their unique requirements, which alone can be time-consuming and costly. Without adequate funding, schools struggle to provide legally required accommodations. These services may include, but are not limited to, access to specialized teachers, therapists, assistive technology, and other classroom modifications.

When we invest in special education early, outcomes improve. When these students have adequate resources, these services bridge gaps and promote inclusion within the general education environment. Students develop greater independence, leading to more employment opportunities for those with disabilities. With adequate funding, districts can better support their educators by ensuring staff receive appropriate training, support, and manageable caseloads.

Underfunding leads to high turnover of staff, larger class sizes, frequent disruptions, increased injuries, and burnout. When these specialized programs are not properly funded, students may fall behind their peers, limiting their ability to develop academic, social, and life skills. These students require and deserve consistency and stability. Without proper supports, students face higher dropout rates, unemployment, and a greater reliance on social services. Clearly, underfunding these specialized programs negatively impacts both the students and the educators who support them.

Proper funding for special education isn't just a legal requirement—it's a moral and social responsibility that ensures EVERY student has access to a quality education and the opportunity to reach their full potential. When all schools are well-funded, these specialized programs promote inclusive school environments that benefit ALL students. Ultimately, this improves our society at large by improving educational

outcomes, decreasing long-term societal costs and fostering empathy and collaboration.