

Submitter: Stephanie Wagner

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee  
On Education

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5516

Chair, Vice Chairs, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Stephanie Wagner, and I am an elementary school teacher, in Portland Public Schools (PPS), as well as a mother of three children, one of whom receives special education services. I am here today to urge you to fully fund SB 5516 and increase investments in special education services across Oregon.

As both an educator and a parent, I see firsthand the impact that funding shortfalls have on our students, our classrooms, and our families. Oregon's commitment to inclusive education is commendable, but without adequate resources, our schools cannot meet the needs of all learners, particularly those with disabilities who require specialized support.

Too often, we do not have enough special education teachers, instructional assistants, or mental health professionals to provide the interventions these students need for their success and safety. Educators are stretched thin, and the students who need the most support are the ones falling through the cracks; and these students then impact the learning environment for all students around them. I have seen students struggle with basic communication and behavioral challenges, not because they lack potential, but because the system lacks the capacity to meet their needs.

At home, my child who receives special education services has faced similar struggles. The dedicated teachers and specialists in PPS work tirelessly to support my child and others like them, but they are under-resourced and overburdened. Wait times for evaluations and services are too long, class sizes are too large, and individualized attention is increasingly difficult to provide. I fear that without increased investment, we will continue to fail our most vulnerable students.

SB 5516 is a critical step toward ensuring that Oregon's special education system receives the funding necessary to support every student, regardless of ability. This funding will help recruit and retain special education professionals, expand access to critical therapies and services, and reduce caseloads so that all students receive the attention they deserve.

I urge you to fully fund SB 5516 this session and make a meaningful commitment to the future of special education in Oregon. Our children, our educators, and our communities are counting on your leadership.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Stephanie Wagner  
Portland, OR