Dear Committee Members:

Hello. My name is Brian Darby. I am a resident of southeast Portland. I am a teacher in the Reynolds School District. Our district primarily serves the communities of Rockwood, Fairview, Wood Village, and Troutdale in east Multnomah County. I am writing to express my concern that the current level of funding for the 2025-2027 state eduction fund requires many school districts around the state, not just Reynolds, to make severe and damaging cuts that are going to have multiple negative impacts. These cuts are coming directly after deep cuts to school district budgets last year.

The budget of 11.3-11.4 billion as it stands is not a budget that will keep schools funded at current levels. Due to inflation, PERS, rising costs to hire and retain staff and other factors it will require deep cuts to budgets in districts around the state. In our district our union leadership has told us 100 positions will be cut. That is just from our membership. It does not include classified or administrative cuts. This is not funding at current levels. This will require schools to operate below necessary staffing levels and place even greater pressure on a fragile system that is underperforming for a variety of reasons.

In the district where I work dozens of positions at all levels and licensure groups were cut last year. This included social workers, teachers, counselors, administrators, and specialists. The building where I work is past capacity. There are not enough adults in the building to support students. I have witnessed multiple violent instances that have happened in the hallways this year where people have been hurt. This is not education. This is not safety. I believe these are directly connected to the needs of students not being met and an insufficient number of caring adults in the school to support students.

Although enrollments have dropped, the needs of students have increased. This includes everything from mental health support, special education services, food assistance and housing assistance that our social workers facilitate, interpreters and liaisons. I have been working as a teacher for over 20 years in Oregon. The experiences and trauma levels have never been as complex as I see now. A lot can be traced to continued effects of the pandemic, but there are multiple additional layers such as lack of affordable housing, inflation, and cuts to essential programs and services. I do not feel that prioritizing enrollment should be the only or primary factor to consider when determining funding levels if we are going to improve schools

in Oregon.

The Reynolds School District serves one of the most diverse populations in the state of Oregon. Many families are living in large apartment complexes. Many are unhoused. It also is one of the most linguistically diverse school districts in the state. I have witnessed many rounds of cuts in our school district and for education in Oregon over the years. I have been laid off in the past as a result of cuts. During these times of contraction I know that that the services our families depend on to survive will be among the first to be cut. This includes social workers, school support personnel, and essential programs that support students but happen to occur outside of the classroom. Then, programs such as arts to languages. Any day now I expect the school district and the union to ask members to vote about cutting days off the school year in order to save money for next year and then probably also cut days from next year.

The very first teachers to be cut are the ones with the least amount of seniority. Unfortunately, this usually means younger staff that is vital in order to continue continuity and bring fresh energy to schools. Reynolds has tried to prioritize diversity and bilingualism in hiring in order to better reflect the communities we serve. These hires will be deeply affected by the cuts. This is not best for students.