



Santiam Canyon School District 129J

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3/25/2025

Chair Neron, Vice Chairs Dobson and McIntire, and Members of the House Education Committee:

I am writing to support the -2 amendments to House Bill 3149, which would provide a one-year extension of funding for our wildfire-impacted school districts. This funding is critical to preventing program cuts in our district and will give us the time needed to prepare for a funding transition following our loss of enrollment in the wake of the devastating Beachie Creek wildfires.

Legislative support has been our lifeline since the fires, and we are deeply grateful for your commitment to the children in these rebuilding communities. The funding you helped secure has allowed us to maintain essential services and enriching programs that help our students grow and thrive in the face of ongoing challenges. It is difficult to express the collective grief our community has experienced after such a disaster, and we are profoundly thankful for your continued support.

Within days of the fire, we lost 12% of our students—those who had nothing to return to. Many others remained, but often in temporary living conditions or forced to travel great distances to stay near Santiam. This was their home. They had already lost so much, and they sacrificed further to remain. We did everything possible to keep our schools a safe haven—a place offering the mental health and counseling services they desperately needed, as well as an environment where they could continue to grow academically and personally. Our schools had to remain a stable refuge in a time when entire communities were mourning the loss of loved ones, homes, and a cherished environment, as well as a loss of safety and security.

Since 2020, we have regained about half of the lost students. However, many communities in the canyon remain largely untouched, with little rebuilding occurring due to high costs, regulatory barriers, or the slow process of healing. Although gradual progress is being made, we need more time to adjust to our new reality, so we do not have to face severe cuts to essential services and programs. Your funding will preserve elementary reading staffing, secondary elective staff, mental health and family support programs, and extracurricular opportunities that enrich our students' lives.

The loss of enrollment and funding could be the next devastating challenge for our district. Your vote for the -2 amendment to HB 3149 would provide a vital one-year funding lifeline for our schools, students, and community, enabling us to continue providing the support our students need.

Sincerely,

Todd Miller

Santiam Canyon School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, sex or age in providing or access to benefits of education services, activities and programs in accordance with Title VI, Title VII, Title IX and other civil rights or discrimination issues; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended; and the American with Disabilities Act.

The following has been designated to coordinate compliance with these legal requirements and may be contacted at the Santiam Canyon School District office for additional information and/or compliance issues: Title II Coordinator, Title IX Coordinator and Section 504 Coordinator: Director of Special Programs, 150 SW Evergreen St./PO Box 197, Mill City, OR 97360, (503) 897-2321