

SB 5515 ODE

Increased resources for the Quality Education Commission

Dear Co-Chairs Sollman and Ruiz and members of the Joint Ways and Means Education Subcommittee:

As part of the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) budget bill (Senate Bill 5515), we urge the legislature to allocate sufficient funds and staffing to the Quality Education Commission (QEC). This support is essential for the QEC to effectively fulfill its constitutional responsibility (Section 8, Article VIII) and statutory obligation (ORS 327.497) of defining best practices and associated costs, ensuring they are “sufficient to meet the established quality goals for kindergarten through grade 12 public education.”

The Legislative Fiscal Office (LFO), the Legislature’s own Joint Committee on Public Education Appropriation (JCPEA), the independent American Institute for Research (AIR), and the Quality Education Commission itself have raised concerns about the ability of the QEC to meet its statutory duty and best practices in developing the Quality Education Model (QEM). Other stakeholders such as Foundations for Better Oregon (FBO) have also highlighted the need for additional resources for the Quality Education Commission.

Many observers of Oregon’s K-12 system, such as the State Auditor, Stand for Children, and the Oregonian editorial board agree that Oregon needs a focused, long-term strategy that is rooted in best practices.

With sufficient resources, the QEC will bring together state and national experts to be a guiding north star for our education policy instead of the disparate and often conflicting legislative proposals we are seeing today.

We urge you to provide additional resources and staffing to the Quality Education Commission. This support will enable the study of best practices for statewide implementation, the refinement of the quality education model with a broader range of student outcomes and more detailed financial data, and the development of a realistic plan to achieve much-needed improvements in student outcomes.

Robin Roemer
VP for Legislation, Oregon PTA
legislation@oregonpta.org

Sources and quotes

Legislative Fiscal Office (LFO)¹

“The 2022 QEC report omitted cost estimates for these additions to the model and omitted other statutorily required elements, including an estimate of how increased investment will impact student outcomes. The Commission issued both a revised report and a clarification letter, which may provide adequate information to support the JPEA’s constitutional obligation to determine whether or not the legislature will have appropriated sufficient funds for education in the 2023-25 biennium.”

Joint Committee on Public Education Appropriation (JCPEA)²

“The Commission’s 2022 QEM report is considerably shorter than previous reports. [...] The Commission’s report does not contain the level of detail necessary to determine the impact of funding insufficiency on the state’s ability to meet quality goals, nor does it contain the data necessary to determine the specific effects of the insufficiency.”

The committee further highlighted its concerns about the QEM and the level of detail included in the QEC report in its transmittal letter.

- “1. We recommend the review of and amendments to statutes relating to the Quality Education Model and Quality Education Commission in conjunction with the Executive Branch, key legislators, and stakeholders so that the model can be modernized to more accurately reflect the financial needs of Oregon Schools. [...]”*
- 2. We recommend passage of legislation to initiate the modernization of the Quality Education Model and the process involved in its creation and use. [...]”*

American Institute for Research³

“The QEM is based on a PJP [Professional Judgement Panel] approach and as noted in Section 2, there are myriad best practices for conducting this type of analysis. Many best practices are time- and resource-demanding. In some instances, best practices cannot be fully met or implemented due to study constraints. Based on our review of the OEM methodology described in this section, we have identified several aspects of the OEM that do not align with PJP best practices that we believe can and should be addressed.” (page 27)

¹ LFO Analysis of SB .. , page 3.

<https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2023R1/Downloads/CommitteeMeetingDocument/263750>

² 82nd LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY JOINT COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC EDUCATION APPROPRIATION, Transmittal Letter and Report, December 18, 2023

<https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2023I1/Downloads/CommitteeMeetingDocument/279153>

³ American Institute for Research, Review and Evaluation of the Efficacy and Methodology of the Quality Education Model, Feb 2025.

“High-quality implementation of a PJP requires many methodological considerations and decisions. Furthermore, following the best practices as we have defined them is both a resource-intensive and iterative process. PJP practices should be continually refined and improved to be responsive to the setting in which they are conducted; PJP practices should be continually refined and improved to be responsive to the setting in which they are conducted; to do it will require that the QEC be given access to the resources, data, and expertise necessary to implement their analyses to the highest standard. [...] If the QEC receives the support necessary to implement the PJP best practices outlined in this report, then we believe that the OEM and our cost function estimates would be valuable complementary tools for identifying the cost of an adequate education in Oregon.” (page 30)

AIR also issued recommendations for the improvement of the QEC and OEM.

Foundations for a Better Oregon⁴

“Unfortunately, the Commission operates with extremely limited support from part-time Oregon Department of Education staff.

To fulfill its charge, the Commission needs increased staffing and resources to perform comprehensive data collection and up-to-date modeling. In addition, the Commission should be gathering robust input from school districts, educators, youth, families, and advocates across the state to inform the Commission’s analysis recommendations.”

Quality Education Commission⁵

“While the Quality Education Model has served Oregon well for the last 20 years, much has changed in the way schools operate. The Quality Education Commission respectfully requests the Governor and Legislature invest in a research-based update to the OEM in order to incorporate changes in the educational service delivery model and in educational best practices that have emerged since the OEM’s first iteration in 1999 and expand the model’s capability to more precisely capture the variability in costs that occur by region and the costs of meeting the differential needs of schools and districts.”

⁴ Foundations for Better Oregon (Public Testimony), December 18, 2023.

<https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/202311/Downloads/CommitteeMeetingDocument/279098>

⁵ Quality Education Commission, 2022 Quality Education Commission Final Report (REVISED 2/8/23), page 3. https://www.oregon.gov/ode/reports-and-data/taskcomm/Documents/OEMReport_2022_VERSION2_Revised2_8_23.pdf

State Auditor⁶

“Risk #5: Governance and Funding Stability: Reforming education is a complex, long-term effort, requiring leaders and policymakers to set clear goals and foster a long-term focus. A large number of separate programs, unrealistic timelines, and frequent changes in funding priorities and leadership can undermine reform efforts. [...]”

At this point, Oregon does not have a detailed road map of programs to improve K-12 education, which could help foster a longer-term focus on improving programs and managing investments already in place.

Suggested leadership actions

- 1. Support ODE in developing a comprehensive road map of programs to improve K-12 education that includes student populations served, funding, scale, district reporting requirements, performance measurement requirements, and performance expectations over time. Focus particularly on programs supporting struggling schools and vulnerable students.*
- 2. Use the road map to ensure new K-12 initiatives and requirements are aligned with existing ODE school improvement work, and track the number of new programs introduced each legislative session. This important step by the Governor and Legislature would help foster coordinated action at ODE, reduce duplication, and reduce administrative burdens on the agency and school districts.*
- 3. Require programs to have strong performance measurement plans and robust interim updates, then focus on incremental improvements, maintain adequate long-term funding, and allow time for meaningful analysis of results”*

Stand for Children⁷

*“While children in almost every other state in the study are rebounding academically, Oregon’s children are not, and the opportunity gaps are widening. At the same time, Oregon’s absenteeism rate is among the highest in the country. These are alarm bells that should be prompting the state to reassess, with urgency, how our relaxed and unfocused approach to education spending statewide is failing our children.
Our children and educators are just as talented as the children and educators in every other state. But we must shift our system of spending to strategies that we know achieve outcomes for children.”*

⁶ State Auditor, K-12 Education – [Systemic Risk Report - State Leaders and Policymakers Must Address Persistent System Risks to Improve K-12 Equity and Student Success](#), May 2022, Report 2022-16, page 1, 17f

⁷ Sarah Pope, [To improve education, target funding on proven measures](#), The Oregonian, June 17, 2024

Oregonian Editorial Board⁸

Beyond funding. Oregon's educational system needs a champion. Instead, over the years, legislators have passed union-backed bills letting students opt out of standardized tests – which help show how Oregon schools fare against others nationwide – and dropped requirements once necessary for graduation. The state education department takes a backseat to local school districts in shaping or influencing the K-12 experience, even when districts use outdated, ineffective curriculum. The lack of vision and ambition should worry Oregon families about the state's commitment to setting students up for success.

⁸ The Oregonian, Editorial: [In 2025, Oregon must turn aspirations into outcomes](#), January 6, 2025