

Submitter: Aimee Sword
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006

I am a kindergarten teacher in the Reynolds School District located in Fairview, Oregon. My school is filled with the most compassionate, hard working, and intelligent staff. However, we have long overworked our systems and they are failing. My district is severely underfunded. We can feel the tension of the purse strings being pulled even tighter everyday. As you walk through the halls you'll see pieces of the wall starting to crack, dry wall patches that have been picked off, stains along the ceiling from our leaky ceiling, and usually a broken piece of furniture (or 2). Our playground is not functional 75% of the time because anytime it rains the water gets trapped on the bark, creating giant puddles. My school does not have enough staff to manage the number of students that receive Special Education services. We have two Special Education Teachers with massive case loads and only 3 education assistants to support them. While they are all working hard and trying their best, the fact of the matter is, that we don't have enough staff. Some of the students have behaviors that pose safety concerns for themselves, the other students, and the staff members. With our limited amount of Special Education staff and support staff, it is nearly impossible to keep everyone safe, let alone carry out individualized plans. For perspective, at any one time, there could be between 1-5 students (in kindergarten alone) running through the halls, throwing items, hitting people, kicking, eloping from the building, biting, yelling profanities, etc. Instead of leading groups, supporting students, or following student plans, all of our Special Education staff spends their day chasing students around the school. Each year we have less materials, less staff, and heavier caseloads to manage. Currently, my class is made up of 16 students and 6 different languages. I have 5 students with individualized education plans and several others that require additional behavior supports. One of my students has enough minutes in their Individualized Education Plan to equal having a staff member supporting them the entire day. With the behaviors I described above, that is possible. This student is left with no support most of the time, which puts them in harm's way. I have another student that climbs up the cubbies (all the way to the ceiling) and jumps down to the ground, they climb on top of the counter in the main office, climb our office windows, and run up to the top of the stairs and try to jump over the 2nd story down to the ground floor. I truly wish my depiction of my experience was dramatized to gain interest, however, it is not. As we begin to plan for the next school year, I ask you to please prioritize pre-K-12 funding. Imagine your own child, niece, nephew, or grandchild in the school that I described. Is that the type of environment you would feel comfortable sending them to everyday? It is unfortunate, but my school is not an anomaly. This is what ALL elementary schools are currently facing. We NEED more to be able to effectively, and safely, educate the future

generation. We need more staff, more Special Education classrooms, and more supplies. Please help us in creating a brighter tomorrow!