

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

My name is Amanda Norman. I have worked in education for almost 20 years, as an elementary classroom teacher, literacy coach and reading specialist. I am currently a reading specialist and literacy coach in the West Linn-Wilsonville school district. Before that I was a reading specialist and literacy coach in the Centennial School District in Gresham. A week and a half ago I, along with 75 other teachers in West Linn-Wilsonville, were cut and have no job to return to next year. My position as a literacy coach was cut entirely. This was a blow to me personally, but it was not as devastating as watching my Title I school be gutted of excellent, committed teachers, who were making a significant difference in our student's achievement. As with so many budget cuts, the people impacted the most are the people most in need of extra support. My Title I school is the lowest achieving primary school in our district. It is also the primary school serving the most vulnerable population, with more of our students living in poverty than other schools in the district. We were by far the most impacted by the budget cuts. I was one of 8 teachers cut at my school. Almost 40% of our classroom teachers will be gone next year. When we go not only will our expertise be lost but the data tracking and teaming systems and school culture of collective efficacy will be rocked to its foundations. I foresee that the students and schools across the state that will be the most impacted by the budget cuts coming will be the Title I schools serving our most vulnerable student populations. Students who need excellent teaching the most often attend schools that struggle the hardest to retain staff because teaching in our current underfunded circumstances at these schools is harder. More students in these schools need academic support, more students come with mental health and behavioral needs due to past trauma, more students struggle with the instability caused by poverty, mobility, and homelessness. These schools need more resources to meet these student's needs, not fewer. But my old Title I school, Butler Creek, in Centennial and my new school of two years in Wilsonville, Boones Ferry, are changing outcomes for kids, exactly what the governor and legislators want. My current school is in improvement, but this year and last we have been making incredible strides in changing outcomes for our students. In 2023 a fifth of kindergarteners left kindergarten without proficiency in one of the most important foundational reading skills, phonemic awareness. The next year only 3% left kindergarten needing further targeted instruction in this area. Last spring 30% more kindergarten students met early literacy benchmark according to our nationally normed screener than in the fall. This year we are on a pace to exceed that number, setting our youngest learners on a trajectory for literacy that drastically changes their futures. At our winter benchmark testing, our first grade scores were already up 10%. We are raising achievement because we have excellent data tracking in place, every child in our school is receiving targeted reading support in small groups with the

lowest achieving students receiving more intensive high dosage tutoring support. Our school is doing exactly what you want, but we are about to be decimated because what the governor heralded as a historic investment in education is actually a cuts budget due to \$670 million in PERs unfunded liability, rising costs and persistent underfunding, especially of special education. I am pleading for you to add enough to the state school fund to enable districts to pay for their PERs liability without cutting services to students and to start making headway on fully funding education to the QEM/AIR amount. I welcome further accountability to ensure districts spend their money on student facing services that work and measure the incremental gains necessary for life-changing academic success.