

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

Hello! My name is Lisa Danskin, and I am a 56-year-old single mother of three children. One of my children is on the autism spectrum, which has given me firsthand insight into the unique challenges faced by students with disabilities and the critical support they need to succeed. For the past 13 years, I have worked as a Special Education Paraeducator in Oregon. Despite my dedication to this vital work, I live with my elderly mother and hold two jobs just to make ends meet. I am also on state assistance not because I don't work hard, but because I simply cannot afford to live on my own with the current wages. In my school district, the lowest paid position starts barely above minimum wage almost equivalent to a #1 combo meal at McDonald's. That's what we're worth on paper. Every day, I support some of our most vulnerable students, those who require extra patience, guidance, and care. I help them learn how to communicate, regulate their emotions, engage with others, and access their education in a meaningful way. I do this not because it's easy, but because it matters. But we're at a breaking point. Without increased funding for special education and better wages for paraeducators, our students will suffer. They will go without the consistent, qualified support they need and deserve. Paraeducators like me are burning out, leaving the profession, or struggling to survive. We can't pour from an empty cup. I urge lawmakers to invest in special education and provide the resources needed to attract and retain dedicated professionals in this field. I also urge you to reject giving tax breaks for billionaires and corporations at the expense of our children. It is cruel and unnecessary. Our students, all students, deserve better. And so do the people who show up every day to support them. Thank you.