

Submitter: Kathryn Liljeholm
On Behalf Of:
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Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4125

I grew up in Ohio, where I received consistent, school-year round education in visual art, music, physical education, and library sciences, as well as consistent and year-round instruction in science and social studies along with math and literary arts, from first grade through twelfth grade. Foreign languages began in 6th grade for all students, and I never went a year without a French, Spanish, or Latin class. I took this quality of education as a matter of course, and never expected when I moved across the country in 2006 in search of adventure and a more active, vibrant community, that I would be sacrificing my children's education. But my children, in each grade, have received a fraction of the education I received in a less progressive state. It's shocking to me that a state that professes to value social justice and opportunity for all so consistently undervalues the intellectual lives of their children. This has been the opposite of what I expected to provide my children, and has become such a pressing concern with such notable outcomes that this year I wonder why I live in Oregon. Two of my children are on IEPs. They require skill, and funded resources, to be the best scholars that they can be. Those two children are in middle school, and when we finally pulled one out of public school and placed him in a charter school...it's the first time he's come home with a book he was assigned to read for school. The first time ever.

What will the future look like, when a generation of children never expected to read a book, learn a foreign language, find their state capitol on a map, or write a story, grow up? My children simply aren't able to make-up for themselves the lack of basic education they receive in an Oregon school. Few children, frankly, are. We all benefit from an educated citizenry capable of forming informed opinions. But that is not the legacy you are leaving our state.

The way the kicker is structured as resulted in chronic underfunding of the education system in Oregon for the last thirty odd years. My mother-in-law who worked for PPS and my spouse who grew up here are both clear on the direct impact it's had, and coming from a state with better education funding and a more sensible tax structure, I am shocked and appalled by the state of things in Oregon. This is the first time I've ever felt hope that the situation may be remedied and I urge you not to squander this chance.