

Chair Frederick, Vice Chair Weber, and Members of the Committee:

Stand requests your support in SB1555. I want to begin with a clarification that is critical to this conversation: this bill is **not** changing Oregon's school funding formula, nor is it abolishing the concept of the Quality Education Model itself. I recognize there is fear and confusion in the education community on these points — but that fear stems from misunderstanding what the bill actually does.

Instead, **SB 1555 modernizes the process we use to operationalize the QEM — a model first adopted in 1999 — so that it reflects today's educational realities and yields credible, useful information for policymakers.**

For more than 25 years, Oregon has relied on the QEM and the volunteer Quality Education Commission to estimate the cost of delivering a high-quality education. Over time, our system has changed fundamentally — from instructional practices and technology to demographic shifts, statewide accountability systems, and the incorporation of new funding streams such as the Student Success Act. Yet the QEM process has not kept pace with those changes.

What this bill does is update that process, ensuring:

- The methodology used to determine education cost is rigorous, objective, and based on current evidence rather than a static set of practices developed decades ago;
- The cost model accounts for the diversity of Oregon schools and districts, with professional panels and prototype schools that reflect real-world variation;
- Legislators and stakeholders have a tool that is meaningful today, not one that inadvertently creates confusion or weakens transparency; and
- The Legislature continues to fulfill its constitutional obligation to either fund public education sufficiently or to explain why appropriations fall short — just with a more credible, updated cost model.

Importantly, at no point does SB 1555 eliminate the idea of using a model to estimate the cost of a quality education. Rather, it restructures how that model is developed, updated, and reported — moving from a volunteer commission to a structured process grounded in transparent contracts, current research, and more accurate funding models.

In short, this bill preserves the intent of the QEM while making it more relevant, reliable, and useful for our 21st-century education system. It takes a tool that is well-intentioned but outdated and turns it into something legislators can actually use to deeply understand education funding in Oregon — without altering the underlying funding formula itself.

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