

Rainy Day Fund Testimony

My name is Rebecca Schroeder. I live in Northeast Portland and I have two young girls – ages 7 and 5. I'm an active member of Stand For Children. I'm also a teacher. I have a Masters in Education and taught children with hearing loss for several years prior to the birth of my children.

So I care about stabilizing funding for education for many reasons. I care about how instability in funding affects my past and future students. Obviously, I care how it affects my own children. And as an advocate for children, I care about how it affects all children and families in Oregon.

Sadly, I've directly experienced the consequences that instability in state funding can have on our public schools. During the 2008-09 school year, our oldest daughter entered Kindergarten. We researched all our options for schools – both public and private. We were happy to find that our neighborhood public school just a few blocks from our house offered pretty much everything we were looking for – excellent teachers, committed and involved families, and quality enrichment to the core curriculum, including music, library skills and even weekly lessons in a second language for all students.

When the budget was set for that school year, the economy was still strong and things were looking pretty good. The state had just sent back \$1 billion in Kicker checks and the long-time principal at our daughter's school was enjoying the first year she had not had to make any cuts to staffing or programs.

Of course, later that fall, the state of the economy changed dramatically and the Oregon Legislature was facing a \$1 billion shortfall. Cuts to the education budget had to be made. I remember attending a coffee chat with the principal in late winter at which she was preparing parents for the cuts soon to come. She mentioned getting rid of our librarian, cutting back on PE and music, increasing class sizes in some grades, eliminating the second language classes and cutting electives for middle school students.

Knowing that future years were likely to bring more cuts, my husband and I made the decision to send our daughter to private school starting the following fall. We knew we just couldn't stomach the instability in funding and the resulting inconsistencies in the quality of the educational experiences our girls would have over the long term if we stayed in public schools.

But we gave up a lot by choosing not to have our daughters attend our neighborhood school. We gave up that blissfully short walk to school and the ease of forming friendships with their neighborhood peers. We gave up the many opportunities to be involved in supporting our neighborhood school community. These are things of great value to us.

By creating a meaningful Rainy Day Fund, you have the opportunity to allow public school principals to plan ahead more than one year at a time. With stable funding, principals and teachers can create sustainable educational programs for their students. Students won't have to worry about whether their favorite subject will be cut or their favorite new teacher laid-off.

During this time when the terrible effects of not having a meaningful Rainy Day Fund are so apparent, you have a unique opportunity to address the long-term stability of funding for vital state services such as education. Please take this important step for Oregon's children.

Thank you.