

April 3, 2013  
Joint Ways & Means Subcommittee – Capital Construction  
SB0822

Speaker Kotek, Senator Girod and members of the committee,

My name is Kim Strelchun, and I am a Director on the Hillsboro School board. Today I write to you on behalf of the almost 21,000 students of our district as well as my two children. I am happy to see legislators talking about reforming PERS and looking at its relationship to current education funding.

However, without additional reforms, the rates for Hillsboro schools will be in the neighborhood of 18.7%. At that level we cannot provide the type of education our children need. The students of my district have suffered enough. Over the last five years my district has made over \$61 million in reductions including cutting 20 school days and 230 staff positions. We have eliminated programs and increased class sizes. While SB0822 is better than no reform, the Hillsboro School District would still see increases that equate to 7.75 school days or 44 teachers with the passage of this bill.

We value our teachers and school employees, but the type of cuts we are facing require us to ask the legislature to reduce our operating costs. One of the biggest cost drivers coming at us next year is the increase in PERS. Asking our children to give again in the quality of their education is not fair to them. These cuts impact all of our students and staff, but I want you to think about what the accumulated cuts mean for a student.

My daughter Ali is currently in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. She started school after the financial crisis of 2003, after our schools landed on the cover pages of national papers and Doonesbury. When I think about Ali's public education experience frankly I am disappointed. Ali's school experience has not included librarians, fully funded music programs, and in some years no PE at all. Elementary school was full of blended grade classrooms designed to manage class size rather than instructional best practices. Her secondary education has included years without enough textbooks for every student or adequate access to computers. She has had far more classes with more than 30 students than less 30 students. During her 10 years, there were more reduced school years than full school years. We only have 12 years to get it right for kids like Ali, and for the majority of those years we have underfunded education and not delivered on our promise for an excellent education.

Hillsboro School District is seeking a balanced approach to PERS reform and while SB0822 is a start it does not go far enough to reduce costs and stabilize the system for the long term. Asking employers to not make enough of a payment on our PERS debt for the next two years is not a good idea - that will simply cost us more in the long run. That's like asking us to skip a payment on our mortgage. We do not believe that makes good sense. We cannot let this problem extend on for years and years to come. We have already lost our opportunity with a generation of children like Ali. We cannot waste another 10 years trying to solve these

problems at the expense of our students. When we are talking about K-12 education, every year is critical. I urge you to continue your discussions on PERS reforms and find a way to control the increasing costs that are hurting Oregon students. SB0822 does not provide enough cost savings to school districts. I believe in the children of our state, and I believe we must find a better solution than another decade of cuts.

Sincerely,

Kim Strelchun  
Vice-Chair  
Hillsboro School District Board of Directors