Local Option Levy Testimony to Senate Finance & Revenue Co.
Wednesday, Feb. 27, 2013, Time: 1:00 – 2:30 p.m. Hearing Room A

Madam Chair - Senator Ginny Burdick and Senate Revenue Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am Karen Cunningham, Beaverton School Board Member and Board Member with the Oregon School Boards Association.

Today, I am urging you to support SJR 10, the compression relief proposal as it relates to local option levies.

As you know, many Oregon school districts have been slashing operating budgets, educational programs and staff over the last five years. The Beaverton School District has reduced budgets by over $142 million. This year alone, Beaverton has reduced $37 million or 11% of our budget for 2012-13. We are not alone in this predicament.

Class sizes in Beaverton are large. It is common to have 35-38 students in an elementary classroom, 40-50 students in a high school classroom with some classes over 60. Again, we are not alone in this funding situation. You have heard similar stories this morning from other districts. This is happening all over Oregon.

During these difficult times, school districts have been turning to their communities to garner some local control over school funding. The local option is one funding mechanism that districts have used to help maintain student educational programs and school days. Communities have not been content with waiting for things to get better at the state level.

However, many school districts in the Portland metro area that have passed local option levies, are now failing to raise the revenue voters

We urge you to support this proposal to amend the Oregon Constitution to eliminate compression from local option levies. Please send this measure to Oregon voters as soon as possible.

Oregon students are depending on all of us to come up with solutions to stabilize education funding. Their education can't wait.

Thank you for your attention today.

Sincerely,

Karen Cunningham
Beaverton School Board Member