

Dear Ways and Means Committee,

March 9th, 2015

It is 8:00pm and I just got home from my teaching day at my local public school. Did the time 8:00pm alarm you at all? It should. Do you put in 3 to 4 extra hours in your days serving the public just to try and remain above water and do what is right? I don't think so. You get to eat dinner at the regular family time and have some time to put up your feet and reflect upon your day. I still have a bag of papers to grade and I also need to prepare for lessons that attempt to provide the "rigor" of the new Common Core State Standards.

Please, stop this madness of underfunding schools in our state! We sucked it up in 2008 when the economy tanked. We fell on the sword to try and maintain the system through those awful years. Education was funded on the backs of the teachers. It still is. Our backs are breaking. Our students suffer from the lack of programs that were once status quo and should still remain so. In my district there are no more after school programs to help close the achievement gaps of our students. There are no music teachers. P.E. is minimally provided as our children increase in obesity all over the nation. Inequality of educational offerings is rampant. Here in Redmond, Oregon we never had the programs that big cities such as Portland and Eugene were able to fund. I can imagine that they still have programs we never dreamed of having due to their proximity to an educated population. Here, I am trying daily to educate my populous. Cuts to our funding would severely impact the little we have to give already.

Let me tell you about my thirty 3rd grade students. But I would rather call them "children" because the term "student" implies they are a number on some chart, but the term "child" implies that they have families, lives, and a little hopeful "kid" inside them.

I get to work every day with thirty 8-9 years olds. I have six students on special learning plans called IEPs. I have two ELL students (Spanish and Thai). I have two who are severely hard of hearing and I wear a microphone every day to try to "reach" them with my lessons. I have a hemophiliac who if he catches a ball too hard in P.E. or gets pushed in play, can be bruised or heaven forbid, get cut and bleed and will need to get medical attention immediately. I have a student on the spectrum for autism but the parents are in denial, and I have a student that dissolves into tears the moment things are too hard for him which is often because he is one of the homeless in my class and his mom is a mental and emotional wreck. Two other students have parents with serious illnesses. These kids miss school often because they are needed at home to care for their ailing parent while the other parent must work to make ends meet. All these students are living in our "lily white" rural community. I hate to imagine what it is like to teach the kids in the other more diverse regions of our state.

Oregon has always had the reputation for strong schools and an educated citizenry. I am a native Oregonian who has taught overseas. In my many travels, the Pacific Northwest used to have the reputation for doing the "right" thing. Now, it is showing that we don't seem to care for our future. But, you have an opportunity to do the RIGHT thing by adequately funding our schools. And If you REALLY want to do the "right" thing.... then don't just adequately fund

us, GIVE us some additional funds to show the rest of our country what can be done to grow some awesomely talented children.

On a side note, don't pay for the high stakes tests. It's not worth the money at this time. Kids (and parents) don't care about these tests. I can teach them until I am blue in the face, and give them all kinds of great skills, but I can't give them the "desire to do well" on that test. They are just kids.

For 27 years I have taught to the best of my abilities. I have taught with the finest of educators. Please support us. Oregon's future depends on it.

Sincerely, Caryn Caramella