



Oregon School Employees Association

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March 16, 2017

Co-Chair Monroe, Co-Chair Smith Warner and Members of the Subcommittee:

My name is Tim Stoelb, and I am president of the Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA), a labor union representing more than 21,000 education employees across the state, including K-12 public schools, education service districts, community colleges, Head Starts, park and recreation districts and libraries. I am here today to speak in opposition to Senate Bill (SB) 5517.

OSEA members are the backbone of Oregon's K-12 education system. They keep the buildings and grounds safe and clean, prepare and serve nutritious meals, and work with teachers and other staff members to provide an ideal classroom environment. They still have not fully recovered from the education cuts passed during the heights of the Great Recession, where we saw the number of special education (SPED) paraprofessionals statewide drop 5 percent, while the number of SPED students grew by 6 percent. Even today, districts will hire two or three part-time employees instead of one full-time employee because they do not have the revenue to pay for benefits.

OSEA cannot support a budget that leads to large cuts in staffing and reduced educational growth for Oregon's students. The co-chair's proposed K-12 budget of \$7.8 billion is a significant step backwards. It is several million dollars short of the governor's budget of \$8.02 billion and more than \$400 million less than the amount schools need just to stay where they are without growth. Both budget proposals would lead to drastic cuts that will only put our students further behind.

In fact, Oregon is already far behind the rest of the nation. We have the third largest class sizes, our current per student investment is 39th among the states, and we still have one of the shortest school years. In fact, by the time a student graduates they have spent one year less in school than the national average. We've been trying to catch up with the rest of the nation, but the current budget proposals will only make things worse.

At the absolute minimum, the K-12 budget should provide districts with basic stability. A budget of \$8.4 billion would allow districts to stay even. Oregon is 15 percent behind the national average on student spending. Any decrease in current funding will have a detrimental impact, and no funding proposal that leads to cuts should be considered.

The Ways and Means Committee should put forward a proposal that allows K-12 schools to make progress in addressing the needs of Oregon's students. A budget of \$8.93 billion would provide enough funding to create true improvement. It would allow schools to reduce class sizes and provide students with more individual support through summer school and after-school programs.

Oregon needs to stop the chronic underfunding of our K-12 education system. Failing to fund our schools at a significant level leaves students behind for the rest of their lives. I ask that you not support SB 5517; it will only hurt our schools and our students.

Tim Stoelb
OSEA President

