



Chairs Monroe and Smith-Warner and members of the committee:

My name is Aliemah Bradley and I am a senior at Jefferson High School Middle College for Advanced Studies in Portland. I am also a member of the Portland Public Schools Board of Education. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you about HB 5517, the State School Fund budget.

I'm not here to talk to you about the specific line items of this budget. I'm here to talk about the unsettling fact that the co-chairs' proposal falls short of the necessary funds for even an adequate education for Oregon students – the cuts that will happen as a result will directly impact the educational opportunities for students across Oregon. Opportunities students cannot get back once they are lost.

I know that you agree. I also understand what it is like to be in your position, receiving testimony on issues of importance during times of difficult choices as a member of the PPS Board, it isn't easy.

However, in the case of education I simply cannot see a more important investment for our state to make a priority. For so long the state budget has allowed our schools to get by, but adequacy and not excellence cannot continue to be our bar of achievement.

I have been taught when making decisions, you must look at potential consequences fully. As the student body president, Black student Union president, and as the student representative to the school board I must always weigh my decisions. As members of this committee I would expect you all do the same. How will this decision impact Oregon students in a year, in five years? Will this impact some groups of students more than others?

Your decisions this legislative session will have lasting impacts for students like those at my school, Jefferson High School, and those that follow behind us. It sends a very specific message about what this governing body views as important. You may not feel the repercussions of your decisions now, but students will. But I am willing to say you will see changes in outcomes over the next two years when the lost opportunities present themselves. Next year and the following year cannot ever be replaced.

I'm only a senior once. Our third graders will be in fifth grade the next time the budget comes up for consideration. What happens in those two years for that student if you choose to underfund education?

At Jefferson, we have made remarkable progress on improving our graduation rates. The graduation rate for the class of 2014 was 66%. Last school year, that number was 84%.

With this **crisis budget**, there is potential for serious setbacks in that progress.

With this budget, we are telling students their education isn't important.

With this budget, we are not setting students up to perform at their full potential.

With this budget, we are not giving students the support necessary for success.

With this budget, we hear empty talk about standards of excellence but actions don't back it and students are watching.

As I stated earlier, I do understand difficult choices. In this case, public education is the foundation of our communities. We know there is a direct correlation between education and public health. And we know there is a direct correlation between education and those who end up in our criminal justice system.

So to me, this isn't a difficult choice. Please stand with students. Put education first in this budget. Do not settle for adequate. Please help us reach for excellence.

Thank you for your time.

Aliemah Bradley  
Student, Jefferson High School  
Portland Public Schools