



Confederation of Oregon School Administrators
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TO: Joint Committee on Ways and Means, Subcommittee on Education
FR: Craig Hawkins, Executive Director - COSA
RE: Testimony regarding K-12 Education During the Coronavirus

Chair Wagner, Vice Chair Thomsen, Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Craig Hawkins, and I am the executive director of COSA, Oregon's school administrator association. We represent about 2,500 superintendents, principals and other school leaders.

20-21 promises to be the most complex and challenging school year in Oregon history. As we look forward to opening schools next fall, district and school leaders are making plans to serve students in person, online, and through a hybrid of in-person and distance learning. In person, most students and staff are likely to have a school experience that is conducted in smaller cohorts, with physical distancing, additional hygiene and sanitation practices, and other safety measures in place. Our students and families are counting on us, not only for a quality education, but, along with our staffs, to ensure that their health and safety are the top priority when planning for in-person learning.

As districts plan, they are wrestling with the complexities of serving students in smaller groups, but with the same number of classrooms and about the same number of teachers. This could mean that, in some districts, half of students attend on A days, and half on B days – with students engaged through distance learning on days they aren't at school. It could mean half days for all students with morning and afternoon shifts. It could mean that districts focus on serving elementary students in person every day – to allow parents to work, in support of local and state economies – with middle and high school students having more of a hybrid experience. And there are many, many other options districts are considering, including

making contingency plans for transitioning to-and-from in-person and distance learning during the year, depending on what happens with COVID-19.

Districts are going to have to rethink not only how to deliver education, but how to safely provide meals, how to provide socially distanced transportation, how to keep facilities clean and sanitary, and much more. We are going to have to ensure that every student has access to the internet and Wi-Fi, as well as the technology to access learning in every district across Oregon. And districts themselves will need resources for technology, and for professional development for teachers on how to effectively use the technology for student learning. To successfully implement any of these approaches, districts will need, at a minimum, the staffing we already have. And districts will need flexibility in how they utilize that staff – especially given the high numbers of “high-risk” staff we employ.

At the same time, our members worry most about being able to meet the needs of our students, specifically those who have been underserved for so long – our students of color, our emerging bilingual students, our homeless students, our students navigating poverty – students who have been hit hardest by this pandemic, with inequities exacerbated and magnified. The mental health and social-emotional needs of our students will be greater than ever when school resumes in the fall, and our members are concerned about their capacity to serve, support and educate them.

That is especially true following the recent revenue forecast, and the estimated 490-million-dollar reduction in the State School Fund, plus very significant reductions in the Student Success Act and Measure 98. These were resources we fought hard to gain, because we knew, even before the pandemic, that the needs of our students are so great. And, in the new reality we are facing for next year, our students will be more vulnerable than ever.

On behalf of COSA members, I make two requests. First, we need your help and your support to protect the K-12 budget, so that we can serve all of our students during the challenges and complexities of the 20-21 school year. And, second, we need your support in making policy judgments to help provide the flexibility our districts need next year so that they can successfully deal with the new realities they will be facing.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.