



**Date:** March 7, 2019  
**To:** The Education Subcommittee of Ways and Means,  
Co-chairs Frederick and McLain and Members  
**From:** John Larson, OEA President  
**RE:** *HB 5016 [State School Fund] and HB 5015 [ODE Operations/Grant-in-aid Budget]*

On behalf of OEA's 45,000 members, serving students in preschool through community college, it is my honor to offer the Association's perspective on the K-12 portion of the budget for public education. Thank you all for the work you are doing to ensure that our students, no matter their zip code or challenges, are well-served.

I would like to speak globally about the needs of our students today, and so my remarks will focus on both the State School Fund and the Department of Education budget, which combine to underwrite the lion's share of school funding to meet Oregon's diverse needs. And because educators' North Star for costing the approximate investment level needed for our K-12 system is the Quality Education Model, I will use this yardstick as a measure of proposed budget levels. (I should note parenthetically that I serve on the Quality Education Commission, which biennially updates its assumptions and works to fine-tune the model to reflect the best educational practices in its advice to policymakers of how much it will cost to fully fund your – and our – ambitions for all students.)

The QEM tells us that the State School Fund should be set at **\$10.7 billion** for the next biennium. For that, you would finally pay for full-day Kindergarten statewide. You would enable overcrowded classrooms to be much smaller. Our districts could restore the corps of elementary teacher librarians decimated in the last recession. This budget could enable districts to include extra staffing for our many students in trauma; provide a richer, more varied set of curriculum offerings – especially in rural districts; bring down caseloads for specialists such as counselors and social workers; and hire enough school nurses so that students once again are lucky enough to have a nurse in every school. For struggling students, districts could provide targeted help and summer learning. And the list goes on. While our state metrics of “accountability” and “student achievement” lag behind expectation, they have still outperformed the level that past investments have purchased. Imagine what our schools could do if adequately funded!

We are disappointed that the official calculation of the current-service-level budget is so far from this investment advice. In fact, as you've no doubt heard, the \$8.77 billion CSL doesn't even approximate a no-cuts level of funding for Oregon's 197 school districts and 19 ESDs. To achieve that threshold, at least \$200 million more would need to be added to the State School Fund. On top of this deficit, we would note with dismay that a targeted reduction specifically to some of our most challenged students is on the table in HB 5015. Oregon's eight Regional Programs serve students on the autism spectrum; the deaf and hard-of-hearing; blind and visually impaired students; and children with traumatic brain injury and severe orthopedic impairments. The **\$6.2 million reduction to Regional**

**Programs** would pare back services, increase caseloads, reduce staffing, and further strain school districts who will be responsible to fill the gap. In essence, this adds millions more in cost shifts at the same time that the CSL is underestimated by hundreds of millions of dollars.

Our students deserve better than this. And while we are grateful to the Joint Committee on Student Success for its work to develop an investment package to supplement these two budgets, that resource will add just one-eleventh of the monies needed to serve our students at a sufficient level. Furthermore, the JCSS list of targeted investments only slightly aligns with the QEM, funding other ideas instead – which means that the QEM’s educational best practices leading to student success will still be underfunded. That is why these budgets before you today are so important.

Two and a half weeks ago, nearly 5,000 of our members, along with parents, communities of color, and other allies, rallied and marched for our students. We are part of the Red for Ed movement whose message to you is “It is the Students’ Turn Now” for fully funding our schools. For too many years, we have heard reason after reason why school funding just couldn’t meet the mark. This year is no different. While committees debate how to hold our schools “more accountable” for results that frankly, the Legislature has never paid for, we are here before you today to say that accountability is a two-way street. It is time to fund the schools our students deserve. Our number for the State School Fund is the Quality Education Model’s number: \$10.7 billion. Thank you.