



TO: Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education
FR: Iton Udosenata, COSA President
RE: Testimony regarding State School Fund budget (Senate Bill 5514)

Good afternoon Co-Chair Frederick, Co-Chair McLain and members of the Committee,

My name is Iton Udosenata and I serve as the President of the Coalition of Oregon School Administrators. I am here today on behalf of our 2500 members across Oregon, asking you to increase the proposed State School Fund budget of \$9.1 billion to \$9.6 billion.

An Uncertain Path for Schools – COVID 19 Derails Investments and Exacerbates Inequities

In 2019, the Legislature passed the Student Success Act and made historic, equity focused investments in our students. These investments collectively marked an important turning point -- one that was designed to help Oregon begin to recover from three decades of underinvestment, while advancing innovative policies that embed educational equity and community collaboration to increase student success.

Less than two years later, a global pandemic has forced the vast majority of students in Oregon to miss a year of in-person school and districts across Oregon are currently in the process of safely reopening and welcoming back hundreds of thousands of students post-Spring Break.

For our students and their families, the past year was a time of upheaval and uncertainty. The global pandemic has taken a massive human and economic toll. It has further exacerbated inequities across our state, particularly for students from Oregon's Tribal, Indigenous, Black, Latinx, and other communities of color, students navigating poverty, and students living in isolated rural communities.

Talk to any of my colleagues and they can tell you stories about students who are worried about coming back to school because they won't recognize their friends when everyone is wearing masks. They know students whose parents have lost family members and livelihoods due to the pandemic. And most worrisome, we are beginning to see the real social and emotional toll the past year has taken on our students as they share stories of the abuse many have suffered in isolation.

A State School Fund Allocation of \$9.1 Billion Plants the Seeds for A Budget Disaster

A \$9.1 billion State School Fund appropriation is only an increase of about 1.1%. A one-percent increase in our base budget means that many school districts and ESDs will be facing operational budget cuts and other difficult choices if it is passed. Over the next several weeks, you will be hearing from your districts about the impacts of this budget and their ability to serve their students.

I know that overall K-12 funding is significant. But please remember that our funding is not interchangeable. High School Success is targeted toward CTE and graduation. The Student Investment Account is targeted toward equitable investments to better serve our students and their communities, including reducing class sizes and investing in resources to help with the social, emotional, and mental health of our students. Both funds are meant to supplement the operational funding of school districts in the State School Fund. And federal funds are intended to provide schools the resources to safely reopen and address the added costs of operating our schools and supporting our students for the next three-plus years.

The State School Fund is still the primary source of funding for our school districts and ESDs. A budget that does not meet our financial needs means we take a huge step backward in our ability to serve students and diminish the impact of the historic investments the Legislature has made. We might be able to prevent the worst impacts on our students today, but we are only planting the seeds for a budget disaster in one to two years when we no longer have any federal funds to lean on.

Our Request is a State School Fund Appropriation of \$9.6 Billion

We look forward to working with you to ensure that we have the resources we need to support all of our students as they return to in-person school. We stand ready to partner, assist and support your efforts to make the needed investments in our students and schools.

Thank you for your time today.