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[betteroregon.org](http://betteroregon.org)

April 14, 2021

Co-Chair Betsy Johnson  
Co-Chair Elizabeth Steiner Hayward  
Co-Chair Dan Rayfield  
Members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means

**RE: Oregon Budget Hearing - Congressional District 1**

Dear Co-Chair Johnson, Co-Chair Steiner Hayward, Co-Chair Rayfield,  
and members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means,

I write to you today from my home in Oregon Senate District 17 and House District 33. I also serve as the Strategic Communications Director at Foundations for a Better Oregon (FBO). FBO is a project of Oregon's largest foundations, who are committed to bridging community, policymakers, and philanthropy to ensure our state supports every child to learn, grow, and thrive.

My work at FBO, and over the years in many ways, has been to connect people to ideas and to each other. If I've learned anything, it's what Langston Hughes said best: "The people often hold great thoughts in their deepest hearts." In this spirit, I ask you to keep community voice at front of mind as you consider how Oregon will invest in children and education during the next biennium.

At FBO, we support the budget priorities outlined by the Oregon Partners for Education Justice (OPEJ), a cross-cultural network of community-based organizations championing an inclusive, equitable, and racially just education system. The investments they call for are rooted in their on-the-ground expertise supporting children who for generations have been denied the education they deserve, and are now disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

I'd especially like to elevate OPEJ's call to fully fund the Student Success Act. The SSA is a historic commitment to equity, and the Legislature recognized that community engagement is key to ensuring that school districts invest state funds effectively to address disparities. Now more





than ever, we can't presume to know what every child needs. We must build on the SSA's promise and ensure underserved communities have a voice in how all education resources in Oregon's state budget are spent at the local level.

Federal stimulus funds are no exception. Since these are one-time funds, community engagement is critical to guide state and local investments strategically toward trauma-informed and culturally-responsive services that meet urgent needs and help every child and family recover.

Thank you for your leadership and the opportunity to share my perspective.

Sincerely,

Louis Wheatley  
Strategic Communications Director  
Foundations for a Better Oregon

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