



Date: February 3, 2022

To: House Committee on Revenue

Re: OEA Support for 4026

The Oregon Education Association represents over 41,000 educators and education service professionals in every community in our state, from pre-K to the community college level. We support the passage of HB 4026, which has evolved from a bill whose funding source our organization helped to shape in 2021 after the wildfires of 2020 that raged through Oregon devastated a number of communities, families, and public schools.

Many of these communities are overrepresented by populations historically marginalized because of poverty, housing insecurity, or race/ethnicity. Some estimate that as many as 80 percent of students in the most-impacted districts lost their permanent housing and all their belongings; and the families in these communities lost power, internet, television, and telephone service as well. Because of these impacts, students' families often had to relocate to stable housing outside of the school district in the aftermath of this tragedy. This resulted in the loss of district per-student funding represented by this relocation.

Our schools in these wildfire-impacted areas are the heart of the communities, critical to their rebuilding efforts. Often the place people congregate, these institutions support community members seeking services. Schools served as hubs and places of stability for communities rocked by loss. Students continue to look at schools as places of stability, places where they can get the resources and attention they need to succeed while so many other aspects of life remain uncertain.

To ensure that students have stability in this critical moment in their lives, we need to stabilize district funding as well. Students need the security of knowing their favorite programs will remain whole; that the educator who inspires them will be there through this school year and the next; and that those services they have come to rely on won't disappear as so many others have in the last two years. School districts severely impacted by the devastation of the 2020 wildfires, causing displacement and educational disruption in the midst of the global COVID-19 pandemic, have a uniquely urgent need to stabilize funding over the next several years, to fully recover.

For these reasons, we urge you to pass HB 4026.