

Submitter: Aimee Viramontes
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure: SB283

Dear Senate Committee Members,

I would like to offer my support and full endorsement for a SPED Pay Differential; increasing wages for ESP and licensed educators working in special education to attract and retain staff to Oregon's deeply under resourced special education programs. As a special education teacher, I understand the stress and workload that my colleagues in this field throughout the state of Oregon are experiencing. Special education teachers not only case manage student IEPs, which involves hours of paperwork and meetings, we

- prepare lessons to teach in our own classes
- prepare specially designed instruction for our educational assistants to complete with students
- co-teach in general education classes
- manage escalating behaviors
- consult with other specialists (Autism consultants, OT/PT, SLPs, mental health therapists, etc)
- consult with general education teachers
- refer students to mental health providers

And while many of our general education teachers are doing some of the mentioned above, they are not doing so at the rate to which special education teachers are involved. In my district we are given two extra days to complete paperwork at the start of the year before teachers come back. While this is a gift, it is a drop in the bucket of time spent all throughout the year working evenings and weekends to stay on top of the mounds of lesson preparation and paperwork required for meetings. I often spend my prep covering for educational assistants who are out, managing behavior or collecting data in general education classrooms. So much responsibility lies on the shoulders of special education teachers and we are burning out a rapid rate, especially since COVID.

When I meet with my colleagues both in and out of my district, many are looking for work outside of Oregon where recruitment and retention bonuses are offered. Special education teachers have more training than general education teachers, many, if not most, have Master's Degrees in the field. However, this additional education and training is not factored into our salary or bonuses. I am afraid that if Oregon does not start thinking outside of the box, we are going to join other states in the nation who are rapidly running out of qualified special educators to meet the needs of the most vulnerable students in our state.