

March 22, 2023

Dear Co-Chairs Frederick and McLain and Members of the Joint Ways and Means Education sub-committee,

My name is Jennifer Stewart, and I am the parent of two Portland public school students. They are about to wrap-up their eighth and fifth grade years.

I'm writing to urge you to **oppose** HB 5015 because, as currently written, it **does not even allocate the minimum** amount of funding that public schools need. As you must be aware, the Oregon Association of Business Officials surveyed 40 school districts across Oregon and has determined that **\$10.3 billion** is necessary to **maintain current services** including core programs and staffing levels for our students. (To be clear, this amount *will not* represent new or additional investments in K-12—which are desperately needed! The \$10.3 billion is sufficient *only* to maintain current staff and programs and address significant inflationary costs.)

So it is not just an opposition to this bill that I ask of you, but you must also insist that the State School Fund be increased at least to \$10.3 billion.

With not enough teachers to go around, my son's middle school classes are crowded. He's not doing experiments in science class due to a lack of funding for supplies; electives at the school have been reduced to a mere trickle. Parents in our school community are funding some of the education and supplemental learning materials that teachers need. My son's gym class took place in a "portable classroom" with holes in the wall and peeling linoleum without even a dedicated gym teacher. The school is dirty. To learn that the state may pass a bill that will not even maintain what we have, but force principals to cut back, makes me want to cry. All the state's public school students deserve so much better than what they are getting, and the state wants to give them less.

I will also remind you that the Quality Education Commission researches best education practices and determines the resources needed to provide an optimal public education system. They bring their findings to the Legislature and Governor every two years, and the estimate for 2022 revealed that a State School Fund investment of **\$11.889 billion** is what is **actually necessary** to achieve lasting educational gains for all students (see the Executive Summary on page five).

You certainly realize the Oregon schools have been grossly underfunded for 20 years. Please, you must finally do something about this. Our kids are behind—way behind—and it is getting worse every year.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter. I urge you to not only oppose the State School Fund bill but to demand it allocate, *at the very least*, \$10.3 billion so that Oregon's public schools are not dragged even more deeply into their pathetic hole of underachievement.

Sincerely,
Jennifer Stewart
Parent, Portland Public Schools