

I am requesting you to secure an additional 23.7 million dollars to support the approximately 13,000 Oregon school-age students who rely on Regional Inclusive Services.

My name is Dana Pedersen. I reside in South Salem and am a licensed special education teacher, a current special education administrator and a parent of two disabled sons. I have the unique perspective and amazing honor to be both a professional educator and parent of children who experience disabilities. This request for additional funding directly supports my youngest son, Drew. Drew is a delightful, happy, loving 18-year-old. This is his senior year at West Salem High School in the Salem-Keizer School district. Drew experiences intellectual disability, a seizure disorder, vision impairment and orthopedic impairment. He is non-verbal and relies on a host of special education supports and Regional Inclusive Services to provide him equitable opportunity and access to his education.

Throughout Drew's public education he has required specialized teaching instruction, services, technology, and equipment. His continued progress in physical, mental, intellectual, and emotional growth can be directly related to the continued Regional Inclusive Services that he has received throughout his educational career.

As an educator and parent, I am driven to advocate and provide Drew and all students access to curriculums, experiences, tools, and professionals that can support their growth and education. Inclusive Regional Services provides equitable, specified, and appropriate services that students who experience disabilities require to thrive.

Drew graduates this June and will continue his public education journey in a Community Transition Program which specifies in supporting 18–21-year-olds who qualify for special education. There he will continue to work with and receive Regional Inclusive Services to focus on job skills and everyday life skills.

I am confident that Oregon's leaders will want to support those most vulnerable students in our state in finding opportunities and growth throughout their public education. It is shameful that the state has not significantly increased the Regional Inclusive Services budget in nearly a decade to support this group of students who deserve an equitable education.

The state is 50 million dollars short of the recommendations in the report on SB 53; we are only asking for an increase of 23.7 million this biennium to allow for sustainable growth and planning for full funding next biennium.

Please consider this funding request and remain curious about how Oregon leaders can support ALL school age students achieve their potential.

If you have any questions, please contact me at ddaea@msn.com, or call me at 503-510-1606.

Sincerely,

Dana Pedersen