

Submitter: Michal Otten
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Education
Measure: HB2895

I am writing in support of House bill 2895. I am a School Psychologist in Portland Public Schools. I have been a School Psychologist for 13 years. The level of need I see in students for special education supports and services is higher than ever. Students are struggling not only academically, but socially, behaviorally, and with their mental health. Student's communication skills are deeply impacted as well. According to recent reports, 20% of students have dyslexia, 9-14% have ADHD, 4% have Autism, and 2% have an intellectual disability. Youth depression and anxiety doubled during the pandemic. I work in Portland Public Schools, which has over 16% of students identified as eligible for special education students. That means Oregon is not providing enough money to meet the needs of over 5% of a historically underfunded population (this translates to about 2,000 students who are not having their needs met by the state). Benson Polytechnic High School, where I work, currently has over 22% of its population identified as eligible for special education services; next year we may have an even high percentage. In spite of these high numbers, Oregon will not fund additional special education supports. Special education teachers, School Psychologists, Speech Language Pathologists, Occupational and Physical Therapists, and paraprofessionals are all left stretched thin and unable to support students. Many will leave the profession, leaving behind students they care about because the workload is too overwhelming and unsustainable. Please do not punish students who desperately need more supports by continuing to underfund special education. Remove the cap and allow schools to meet the needs of ALL students with disabilities.