

March 28, 2023

Dear Co-Chairs Frederick and McLain and Members of the Joint Ways and Means Education Subcommittee;

My name is Will Musser and I am writing today to urge you to support HB 5015 whereby money from the state's general fund would be appropriated to the State School Fund to support public education in Oregon.

Our family moved to the Alameda neighborhood of Portland in June 2019 and enrolled our kids at the neighborhood elementary school with the same name and a "good" reputation. We had every intention that our kids would attend PPS schools and graduate from a public high school in Oregon. However, at this point, we are no longer that optimistic about public education in Oregon, and we are planning to apply to private schools for the upcoming year(s).

Since 2015, our family has had to move from Colorado, to Connecticut, to California, and ultimately to Oregon in order to find financial security as well as a good overall fit for our family. Throughout this time, our children have always been in the public school systems since kindergarten. Over the past 6-8 months during which I have served as Chair of a PPS Local School Foundation (LSF) for my son's school, Beaumont Middle School, my wife and I have learned quickly about the uniquely inadequate budgeting and funding process by our adopted state of Oregon for its public school system. It is truly shocking and appalling that a state as progressive as Oregon could get away with consistently underfunding what is necessary to advance, let alone maintain, adequate support for public education in this state. A healthy public school system is essential for a thriving democracy. Full stop. It's great that Oregon has universal mail-in voting, but how about a fully funded public school system?

Every two years, the Quality Education Model (QEM) apparently reports their findings to the state Legislature and the Governor, for essentially naught, as the amounts identified and requested are seemingly never granted or allocated. Apparently, this has been the case for decades, as recounted by numerous Oregonians and Portlanders who have been here much longer than we have. This is an absolute outrage, as well as a tragedy. The 2022 QEM estimates that it will require a State School Fund investment of ~\$11.9 billion to achieve lasting educational gains for all students, but the Governor's Recommended Budget only proposes allocating \$9.9 billion to the State School Fund – a \$2 billion shortfall. This is a deep chasm, in my opinion, made worse by the unique circumstances of everyone's emerging out of a once in a lifetime global pandemic. The Oregon state government seems totally okay with an egregious underinvestment in our Oregonian children's futures, our children's development, and this will have numerous economic, demographic, and health consequences. This seems totally unconscionable and irresponsible to me.

I urge you all to support HB 5015 and recommend at least a \$10.3 billion appropriation to the State School Fund. Our kids, our students, deserve it. Thank you in advance for taking the time to read and consider my letter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "William M. Musser IV". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line at the end.

William M. Musser IV, PhD  
Portland, OR 97212-2535