

10:00 a.m., Saturday, April 7, 2023

Portland Community College
Sylvania Campus - PAC Auditorium
12000 SW 49th Ave.

Good morning and thank you for this opportunity. My name is Jennifer Stewart, and I am a frustrated PPS parent.

I am testifying today in response to the Governor's proposed budget which recommends \$9.9 billion for the 2023 State School Fund. That amount is inadequate.

You must be aware that 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 current staffing levels. (To be clear, this amount does not represent new or additional investments in our K-12 schools—which *are* desperately needed. The \$10.3 billion is sufficient only to maintain current staff and programs, addressing significant inflationary costs.)

I'd like to tell you what "current levels" means for just one of my kids' schools.

With not enough teachers to go around, our North Portland middle school classes are over-crowded. My son's language arts teacher has between 32 and **39** students in each of her classes and, as a result, feels her classes are just too big for quizzes or traditional language arts writing assignments that are done with pen and paper. Students do not conduct experiments or other hands-on learning activities in science class due to a lack of funding for supplies; electives at our middle school have been reduced to a mere trickle. My son's gym class earlier this year took place in a portable classroom with holes in the wall, peeling linoleum floor, and 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, is deeply upsetting to me. Oregon's public-school students deserve so much better than what they are currently getting, and the state is gearing up to give them less.

I recently became aware of the Quality Education Commission, which you know about. The QEC 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 **\$11.9 billion** is what is **necessary** to achieve *lasting* educational gains for all students. That is what's really needed, but students, families and educators, like me, are just clawing with fingernails in a desperate attempt to keep what we have, inadequate though it is.

You know that Oregon schools have been underfunded for 20 years. You must finally do something about this. Our kids are way behind and it is getting worse every year. HB 5015 should be allocating \$11.9 billion for the State School Fund, but we'll settle for \$10.3. Anything less drags Oregon's public schools more deeply into their pathetic hole of underachievement. Thank you.