

Submitter: Suzanne Clarke
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure: SB5506

I urge you to provide \$10.3 billion to the State School Fund this session. I've been a Portland Public Schools (PPS) parent for 10 years. I attended public schools in Fairfax County, Virginia, where public schools are supported by a sturdy three-legged tax school, so I was stunned when my daughter entered PPS Kindergarten because all PE teachers were on the chopping block, she had no art and no music, she had 31 students in her classroom and that number grew the following year.

When I asked my daughter's principal what I could do to help the situation, I was told to start a foundation so that parents could fundraise for the much needed core staff. I actually tried to do that and, not surprisingly, I quickly learned that most families and even entire school communities in Portland do not have the resources to fundraise to purchase teachers. In fact, our public schools are using the inadequate resources provided to them to help families with basic needs in lieu of providing a high-quality education that will prepare students for graduation and the job market. My daughter is a 9th grader at Roosevelt HS where only 75% of the students graduated last year, an increase from prior years.

Back in 2012, when I saw children in my daughter's elementary school filling their pockets and backpacks with leftover food from school trash cans to take home to their families, I knew that more had to be done. I worked on Measure 97 in 2016; it failed. I advocated for the Student Success Act, which passed, did not appropriate enough funding.

When you underfund public schools by over \$20 billion for over two decades you need to appropriate much more than \$9.9 billion to get schools and the most underserved students on track.

Oregon does not have a scarcity of resources. It has a scarcity of will. The unwillingness of our state to fully fund schools is an outcome of systemic racism that so pervades our state's history and present decision-making. Oregon has a \$4 billion kicker, most of which will return to the pockets of Oregon's white and wealthy residents. Oregon has a robust rainy day fund of approximately \$1.3 billion. As you saw at the March session and many other State School Fund work sessions, it is raining. You saw the tears and heard the emotional anguish of parents, teachers and students who are at their wit's end.

Will you provide a minimum of \$10.3 billion to fund our K-12 schools?