

Submitter: Moira Finnegan
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure: SB5506

I have worked in special education with Portland Public Schools for 12 years. There are many things I love about my job. There are also things that make my job really hard. Probably the hardest thing about my job, and the job of so many of us working in special education, is the fact that we don't have enough staff to meet the needs of our students.

The only way for school districts to provide adequate staffing for special education is for the legislature to provide adequate funding for special education. That's why I'm asking you to support HB 2895 and remove the cap on special education funding for Oregon schools. I'm asking that you make the increase in special education funding a true increase in the total amount of state school funds going to districts, rather than just a re-allocation of existing funds. I'm asking that you provide the funding called for by Oregon's Quality Education Model.

I don't envy your jobs of having to make the tough decisions about how to allocate limited state funds to support essential services like education, housing, health care, and public safety. But recently I've been thinking that in any budget, be it a household budget, a business budget or a state budget, you have money coming in and money going out. When there isn't enough money to cover your expenses, you can cut down on spending, increase your income, or you can do a combination of both.

In my 12 years of working in special education, I've never seen a district or the legislature try to increase money coming into the special education system as a way to solve the problem of not having enough money to meet our students' needs. Instead, we are told by our districts and our elected representatives that there just isn't enough money in the district budget or state budget to meet our students' needs.

The solution for education always seems to be to cut the budget rather than adding more money into the system to meet our students' needs.

I urge you to consider ways to bring more revenue into the system to support our learners with special needs. I read an article recently that said the legislature doesn't have access to information about how much income tax big corporations like Amazon, Walmart and Nike are paying in Oregon.

I think all of you on this committee, and all of our elected representatives, have the right to know whether big corporations are paying their fair share of income taxes. You are the ones making the tough decisions about allocating state funds. How can

you decide whether corporations are paying their fair share if you don't even know how much they are paying?

I urge you to consider legislation that would give you the knowledge you need to determine if big corporations are paying their fair share. It could potentially help in coming up with the funding needed to ensure all of Oregon's children get the quality education they deserve, including our students with special needs. Thank you.