

Submitter: SJ Belmonte
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure: SB5506

I ask for your support in a no-cuts education budget. I am graduating from Portland State University with my Master of Social Work in just a few months. It is my second year as a school social work intern in the Portland Metro area.

The U.S. Surgeon General, Dr. Murthy issued a rare public health advisory on the growing mental health crisis among children, adolescents, and young adults on December 6, 2021. We are only seeing this mental health crisis grow day to day. We need to at least stay funded at the current rate to be able to keep students minimally supported with their social emotional needs.

I am strongly concerned about what will happen to our Black, Latinx, Indigenous and other students of color if our state budget is reduced. For our homeless students, our newcomer students, our low-income students, and/or our lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer and gender expansive students.

We are rarely able to find a child or adolescent outpatient community therapists with immediate openings. Many kids are on wait lists that are 12-18 months long. In a child's lifespan that is too long to be waiting for mental health support. I can't imagine how much worse our kid's mental health will be if they can't access trained behavioral health professionals at school because our schools weren't properly funded.

Our student's social emotional health is directly proportional to their academic success. We need you to prioritize a \$10.3 billion minimum in the State School Fund to show that you value our students, families, and communities across Oregon.