

Submitter: Calley Odum-Dalenberg
On Behalf Of: OSEA
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure: SB5506

The proposed budget leaves a 4 million dollar shortfall that will directly impact myself, my school, and my students. Every year, we lose classroom assistants like new hires at a McDonalds -- except the local McDonald's would pay them better. They leave because this work is hard, physically and emotionally. They leave because they are told we won't be able to afford them next year, or that they must play aide to three classrooms at the same time, all while being unable to afford the average rent in Oregon -- I know I can't, though I work full time. How can we keep our slim remaining staff if we cannot afford to pay them?

I wonder when the last time is that you on the Ways and Means committee allowed yourselves to be cursed at? Spit on? Scratched, slapped, attacked with scissors and books and chairs? I wonder when the last time was that you held someone while they cried themselves dry, and then were expected to put them back to work? I wonder when last you experienced a shooting threat?
I wonder when you last did those things for 16 dollars an hour?

The truth is, we cannot afford to lose our classified staff: our lunch lady, our library media technician, our custodian, our invaluable classroom aides, our technology staff, our wonderful office workers. They are the skeletal structure of our school, the bones that keep this body moving, the heart that builds a personal relationship with our students. I am not sure that those outside a school system can comprehend just how essential classified staff are to the daily running of a school. Yet when budgets like the one proposed are made, they are the first to be cut off, and the students suffer for it.

In order to cover the basic needs of our staff -- not even to *improve* their quality of life, but just to *maintain* -- we MUST have at least 10.3 billion allocated to Oregon's school fund. We cannot function without it. We are worth more.