

Hola muy buenas tardes chairs Sanchez and Steiner, mi nombre is Angelica Mendoza and I am a bilingual/bicultural school counselor who is funded through measure 98 funds for the Phoenix Talent School District in Southern Oregon.

First, I would like to start by saying gracias (thank you) for the opportunity to be here to share my story with you all today. I want to acknowledge that in my own personal experience, education has opened many doors (habre puertas) and I am aware of my privileges as I am a Latina with a Master's degree, however, I know that if it wasn't for caring teachers who believed in my potential to attend a four year university, I'm not sure this would have been attainable. As a first generation student of color, I know first hand the obstacles my community faces in pursuit of the American dream and that is why it is essential to have culturally competent professionals who can help encourage, empower, and guide students through their educational journeys.

My career goal is to continue to advocate and empower students like me to have a voice and that is why I am here today.

As you may already know, our Phoenix Talent school district continues to be impacted from the repercussions of COVID and the devastation from the almeda fire as we are seeing a higher level of need in mental health and behavioral services. To give more insight, 40% of our district was impacted directly by the almeda fire, but our whole community was devastated. Many of our families continue to be displaced and/or in survival mode.

Data has shown a clear disproportionate impact on our communities of color. The need for more bilingual/bicultural mental health services is at an-all time high. Bilingual/bicultural counselors who see and serve a diverse pool of students are few and far between, especially in southern Oregon. The need for proper cultural representation in certified staff is needed. Our staff demographics do not reflect our student body population. Representation is needed for community building, student belonging, and student success. It is not realistic to expect all of these with more budget cuts, lack of funding, or retention of adequate staff when being overworked.

In addition, we have seen an increase in our ELD student population but with little support due to being short staffed. I have students advocating

for more support as they struggle navigating the American school system especially when they do not know the language.

Without an investment of \$10.2 billion, all of the forward progress we have been able to make over the past year will go away. Please support a true CSL budget of \$10.2 billion for K12 and please do so not at the expense of other services, but by not putting additional resources into the rainy day fund. We need the investment this biennium so our students and communities can have the strong neighborhood public schools they deserve and they are able to thrive.