

Submitter: Matthew Smith
On Behalf Of: Jack Smith
Committee: House Committee On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2953

As a parent of my son who attends McDaniel High School in the Portland Public school district, I am writing you to advocate for the passage of HB 2953 and legislation that fully funds special education services.

I am also a member of the Sacred Organizing Coalition, whose organizations and initiatives share a commitment to organizing the hundreds of community-based teams we work with - and the thousands of everyday Oregonians that are part of these local groups - to move us toward an Oregon where all belong.

My 16-year-old, 10th grade son has received essential mental health services from counselors at his school. He has a dual diagnosis of anxiety and ADHD. Without their support, it would be nearly impossible for him to successfully learn.

I believe that every student in Oregon deserves the support they need. I believe that teachers and staff should be equipped with the resources necessary for every child to succeed.

But because of an outdated funding formula designed over 30 years ago, Oregon is currently leaving out over 19,000 students or almost 1/4th of the 80,000 students in its funding. That's even though the need has drastically increased for special education services, with diagnoses for those with autism or anxiety and children with other needs continuing to rise.

Doing nothing means young people not getting basic support for their needs. It means more teachers and staff burnout from not having enough resourcing.

Underfunded mandates mean local schools having to choose cuts in various programs. Doing nothing affects all of us.

We cannot just let an old law from the 1990s dictate whose children get to belong in Oregon schools. / As the parent of my son who has experienced belonging from these essential services, I believe all of our children belong here.

Our funding should reflect this truth.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration,

Matthew C. Smith

Parent and Hospice Chaplain