

Dear Members of the Committee

Thank you for your continued dedication to make sure every child in the state of Oregon gets a chance at the education they deserve.

I am writing to you today as an Oregonian and an aunt who strongly believes in the right of all children to have the necessary resources to meet their needs effectively regardless of their special needs. I am requesting for you to pass HB 2953 and for the legislation to fully fund special education services. I am with the Sacred Organizing Coalition who work hard and make a huge commitment to organize hundreds of community-based teams and help thousands of everyday Oregonians in local groups. The Sacred Organizing Coalition helps us move to where we all belong.

I have a nephew who needed the necessary resources to go through school from elementary through high school. Because of the inadequate resources when it was time for him to graduate and move on, he enrolled in Le Cordon Bleu, it was his dream to be a culinary chef however, he did not receive the individualized education plan and support he deserved, it hindered his social development in future opportunities Le Cordon Bleu would not accept him even though he graduated with a special education certificate. This happened because he did not have early effective intervention.

As you may be aware special education programs are significantly underfunded which leads to a shortage of qualified staff, inadequate resources and a lack of specialized support. This has not only affected my nephew but also it has impacted many children with disabilities who need special services to succeed. The lack of funding creates a learning environment that is inadequately supporting each student which hinders their academic progress, their social development, and future opportunities. I believe every student in Oregon deserves the support needed to succeed.

There has been a drastic increase in special needs students that are diagnosed with autism, anxiety, neurodivergence, dyslexia and other disabilities. Nearly 80,000 students in recent years have needed special educational services; however, the Oregon funding formula that was designed over 30 years ago is leaving out over 19, 000 students. These old laws from the 1990s need to be changed so they don't dictate whose children get to have quality education in Oregon schools.

Investing in special education is a basic right of students with disabilities, it is not only a moral obligation it is a great financial decision and an effective intervention. If we don't take action that means that these young people are not getting their basic needs met. Teachers and staff get burned out by not having enough resources and doing nothing affects all of us.

And as a member of the community who knows the importance of supporting our children so they can have better long-term outcomes, reduce the need for costly services later in life, and reach their full potential with the same opportunities as their peers, is our responsibility, our funding should reflect this truth.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration,

Tammy Rodgers