

Submitter: Marika Zimmerly-Beck

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Education

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2953

We must pass HB 2953 so that school districts can fully fund special education services. I am the parent of a second grader at an elementary school in SE Portland.

My child has been receiving or has been supposed to receive speech services since they were 18 months old. We were very happy with our transition to kindergarten IEP meeting and were hopeful that our Special Ed experience at PPS would be a positive one. Unfortunately our school assigned speech path had to go on medical leave in the spring of my child's kindergarten year. The district does not provide substitutes for SLPs and so our child didn't get any speech services. In the fall of 1st grade our SLP again went on medical leave. We did not receive any notice from the school and it wasn't until another parent checked in that I even realized we were not getting legally required services. Because of my child's speech delay, her ability to learn to read has been impacted. She can't sound out words that she is not pronouncing correctly. We all know that learning to read is a foundational skill and because of my child's delay in reading, due to her lack of speech services, I worry about her future success in school.

At our IEP meeting this past December, I was dismayed to hear that our school Speech Path has a caseload of 55 students, when it should be 30 to actually meet the needs of our kids. To be clear, while I have been frustrated with our lack of speech services at school over the last several years, this is not the SLP's fault. It is the district's inability or unwillingness to properly fund our special education department. Even more than the district, it is the state who despite having seen the number of millionaires quadruple in the last fifteen years has not addressed the longstanding revenue issues our schools face. My kid loves to learn. They love school. They love their teachers and their SLP. Why isn't my kid and the grown ups here at PPS who support her being given the resources they need to be successful? Passing and funding HB 2953 would go part of the way to getting my kid and others like her the special education services they need to be successful in school.