

Submitter: Jacob Soto
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2953

Dear Legislator,

I have been an educator in Portland for the past 20 years and I'm writing to ask for your support in raising the cap on SPED funding for our great state.

I am a first hand witness to the degradation of our school system over the years due to lack of funding and the negative impact it has on our most vulnerable students. Any SPED team I've encountered in my 20 years has been among the most dedicated to the needs of their students and is almost always seen and treated as second-class citizens compared to their non-SPED counterparts with regards to district support and funding. Every year I hear stories of students who are left behind by a system that seems was never meant to help them succeed. I fear the recent push to integrate students into the regular classroom under the flowery language of "neighborhood schools" will cause even more harm to this vulnerable community of students.

Last school year we had a student with severe autism attempt to mainstream at our school. This student was in my class and would have regular outbursts, talk and touch other students inappropriately, and had a physical altercation with an administrator to at led a long term leave due to the injuries. That student needed more than we could provide and needless damage was done to them and everyone else caught up in chaos. This all could have been avoided with adequate funding, plain and simple.

Our schools are suffering greatly and SPED funding is just the tip of the iceberg but is of the most urgent and immediate need. As I'm sure you know, educators are among the most dedicated to improving the lives of their students and will always go above and beyond to serve them. I know as a legislator you share that same drive. Will you join us in sending a resounding and unified message to the people of our state that we will care for the most vulnerable in our schools by supporting raising the cap on SPED finding?

Thank you for your time,
Jacob Soto
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Portland