



Baker Charter Schools
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February 14, 2025,

Chair Neron, Vice Chair Dobson, Vice Chair McIntire, and Members of the House Education Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 2953. My name is Dr. Shawn Farrens, and I serve as the Principal and Director of Human Resources for Baker Charter Schools. Baker Web Academy provides education to approximately 3,400 students across Oregon, 15% of whom qualify for special education services. Families seek us out because, according to them, we are able to meet their students' needs in ways their local schools have not.

Before becoming an administrator, I worked as a special education assistant and later as a special education teacher, serving in both life skills and resource room settings. Those years shaped my understanding of education and fueled my passion for ensuring that every student has access to the learning environment that best supports their success. Every student is unique, and special education is fundamentally about providing a personalized education that meets each child's needs.

Unfortunately, for many years, special education in Oregon has been drastically underfunded. To put this into perspective, while 15% of Baker Web Academy students qualify for special education services, we are underfunded by 4%. This shortfall amounts to approximately \$1.43 million—equivalent to the salaries of 10 teachers who could be providing critical services and personalized support for our students.

HB 2953 helps address this funding gap for Baker Web Academy and many other schools and districts across Oregon. With this funding, we would be able to reduce special education teacher caseloads and expand specialized services by hiring additional teachers and specialists.

I urge you to pass this bill out of committee and onto the House for a vote. This legislation is an essential step toward ensuring our schools have the resources needed to provide the high-quality, personalized education that all students deserve.

Sincerely,

Shawn Farrens, EdD, pHCLE
Principal/Director of HR
Baker Charter Schools