

Submitter: Maggie Hodder

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Education

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2953

To the Committee on Education,

First I would like to extend my appreciation for your efforts so far on HB 2953. Thank you.

I want to share my story in hopes that it may help guide your decisions toward passing this critically important legislation. My son is a young person who is exactly the kind of friend you would want your own children to have. He shows empathy, compassion, and kindness every day. In short, he has been an absolute joy since he was a baby. My son also has learning disabilities that impact his ability to write, sometimes even his own name. I don't expect the Portland Public Schools to "cure" this, and I don't think my child deserves anything more than other children like him. But placing an arbitrary cap on the amount of funding Oregon schools are allowed to distribute to their high-needs students is just wrong. First, federal law requires adequate special education services to be provided, and keeping the cap in place could leave Oregon open to lawsuits on behalf of disabled children. Second, denying these children the services they need to maximize their success is a perfect example of the old saying "penny wise pound foolish". Oregon taxpayers lose when these children finish high school being unable to fill out even a basic job application and when they begin drawing on public benefits. Lastly, all kids lose out on a quality education when districts supplement their special education budgets with funds that would have been sent to mainstream (non-special ed) classrooms.

My son and children like him deserve every opportunity to become productive members of Oregon communities. We are doing everything we can for our kids in chronically underfunded schools. Parents donate money, wash dishes, pay for supplies (even toilet paper), tutor, supervise recess....I could go on. We are not licensed teachers and do not have the skills special educators have. Please remove the cap on special education funding so all Oregon children can have bright futures (and become taxpayers too). Thank you.