

Submitter: Katherine Hoffman

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Education

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2953

As a native Oregonian who grew up as a neurotypical kid with no learning differences and a supportive family, I thrived in the Oregon Public Education system and am forever grateful for the education I received. Now raising my own 3 kids in Portland Public Schools, I had much the same experience until my 3rd child reached Kindergarten and started having significant difficulties reaching grade level. After two years we decided to seek testing outside the school in hopes of intervening if there was a learning difference, and we quickly received a diagnosis of dyslexia. Our child is incredibly bright and has the support of wonderful teachers and her family, but even with all those things in her corner, we had to hire a tutor at our own cost to teach her to read. The district does not have enough properly trained teachers or reading specialists who can reach the large number of students who are not reading at grade level (or at all). The special education services our child does receive are essential to her ability to thrive in the classroom and will in the long-term help her to thrive as a member of our community. Until we got the diagnosis and support our daughter needed she believed that she was just "dumb". We were lucky to intervene before that had become her identity, but for so many students they are not as lucky and without the full SPED support they need, they end up dropping out of school or performing well below their ability, both of which lead to disastrous outcomes for Oregon. I would much rather increase our SPED funding than pay many times more for the jails or treatment centers that these students end up in when they haven't been given the resources they deserve. Please support the removal of the cap on the amount of money distributed for SPED.