

Submitter: Margaret Henry
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2953

Dear Members of the Legislature,

I am writing to express my strong support for Oregon House Bill 2953, which seeks to increase the cap on Special Education Funding. This legislation is critical for ensuring that all students, particularly the most vulnerable among us, receive the quality education and resources they deserve.

The current cap on special education funding limits the resources available to school districts, directly impacting the quality of education for students with disabilities. According to the Oregon Department of Education, approximately 13% of Oregon's students receive special education services (ODE, 2022). However, funding has not kept pace with the increasing number of students requiring support. A report by the National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD) indicates that states, including Oregon, are consistently underfunding special education, leading to significant financial strain on local districts (NCLD, 2020).

My daughter, Randa, is struggling to attach letter sounds to letters. She is in Kindergarten and has a wonderful teacher, who has been proactive in reaching out to me to discuss her challenges. She is far behind her peers, and is likely dyslexic. We have a strong family history of dyslexia, Randa struggles with pronunciation and already has an iep for speech pathology, she doesn't seem to be able to attach letter sounds to letters, and writes her letters backwards most of the time. She's also a kid who struggles with vulnerability. She, at 5 years old, has already found ways to "opt-out," saying things like, "Maybe a "b" says "buh" in your language, but it doesn't in mine." Because special education resources are scarce, interventions are hard to come by and best practices are ignored. Ideally a student like Randa would be evaluated for dyslexia due to the significant evidence showing her struggles and data from the National Center for Learning Disabilities that highlights that early intervention for students with learning disabilities can lead to a higher likelihood of academic success and reduced dropout rates (NCLD, 2019). However, because of the scarcity in SPED funding, too often kids like Randa are being left behind. This can cause lifelong learning problems—making learning a struggle when it doesn't need to be.

Increasing the Special Education Cap Funding through House Bill 2953 will empower our schools to invest in critical resources such as specialized training for teachers, hiring qualified personnel, and providing necessary educational materials. The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) emphasizes that adequate funding is essential for delivering high-quality special education services that meet the diverse needs of students (CEC, 2021).

Moreover, investing in special education has long-term benefits for our communities. Research shows that students with disabilities who receive appropriate support are

more likely to graduate, pursue higher education, and become productive members of society (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2020). If Oregon wants to attract people to our State, we need to support our children in learning. No one wants to live in a State that doesn't have good schools and cannot provide for our students. If we are unable to give a quality education to students with disabilities, we are increasing the likelihood that these children grow up to struggle in gaining employment, housing, and mental health services.

I strongly urge you to support Oregon House Bill 2953. Increasing the Special Education Cap is not just a financial issue; it is a matter of equity and opportunity for ALL students. By ensuring that schools have the necessary resources to support students with disabilities, we can create a more inclusive and effective educational environment, and ultimately, a better Oregon.

Thank you for your attention to this vital issue. Together, we can ensure that every child in Oregon has the opportunity to reach their full potential.