

Submitter: Sam Whitelaw

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Revenue

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2953

Hi, my name is Sam. I am a special education teacher in Portland. This is my ninth year teaching and my second year teaching in Oregon. When I initially started teaching here in Portland, I realized how differently our district's special education department is run and managed. As a special education teacher, I am not only a teacher but also a case manager and my own administrative assistant. The endless paperwork impacts the amount of time I'm actually spending with my students. I find that our district is missing so many supports that should be in place; behavior specialists to support students in crisis, paraprofessionals to help support students during class time, more staff to help with supporting the many tasks that have been added onto my plate. Caseloads are too high, students minutes are not being met consistently, and real learning isn't always happening. This isn't the fault of teachers and school workers, it's the way the state and the districts choose to fund services. Why can't we have everything our students with disabilities deserve? Why can't we have everything the young people of this state deserve? Districts move to cut essential services, increase class sizes, and try to support children with even less. Cities and counties move to cut essential services that support the needs of our young people in and outside of school. Choosing to raise the cap on how much the state funds special education shouldn't even be up for debate. There are federally mandated laws that are supposed to ensure that special education is fully funded in this state. We can't push this responsibility over to the district. It isn't happening. With the current 11% cap, students who should receive services are not. This is shameful, illegal, and needs to change. Our young people deserve better!