

Submitter: Sally Foster

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee
On Education

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5516

My child's classroom experience in a PPS school is as good as it gets when I talk with other parents, and yet my child is faced with a constant challenge with neurodivergent peers not getting appropriate support. These neurodivergent children are GOOD kids, they have active and engaged caregivers, the school is INVOLVED, and yet we still experience days where one of these kids will seize the classroom with their behavior resulting in injuries and loss of learning time. In my personal circle, I have FIVE children from FIVE different families I can name and know personally that are or have been UNDERSERVED by PPS (specifically at my elementary school) in the last 24 months. Again, these are children who are identified as neurodiverse, have engaged caregivers, secured intervention supports at school, and that was STILL NOT ENOUGH.

We need to do more, and it must come in the form of more funding for PEOPLE resources. These kids need more trusted adults to rely on during their school day to intervene when their homeroom or specials teacher needs help. SB5516 is simply not enough - Since 2011, Oregon has not once spent the recommended amount on public education and every biennium that the Legislature underfunded education, state test scores dropped to new lows. The identical budget proposals for the State School Fund from Governor Kotek and the Co-Chairs of Ways & Means make those 2023-25 cuts permanent and will lead to further cuts for some school districts. The proposed budget doesn't invest in schools but rather maintains the current, inadequate status quo.

Please find ways to increase funding instead of maintain the status quo. Our Education Systems are an embarrassment compared to other states. I urge the legislature to give schools and students a chance and the necessary resources to improve outcomes. The current status quo is not working. Not for our children, not for us as a state.