

Submitter: Alyssa Koomas
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee
On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5516

I am writing in opposition to SB 5516 which, as it stands, will maintain the current, inadequate status quo of underfunding our public schools in Oregon. Adjusted for cost of living, Oregon is 31st in the nation for per-student funding and we spend \$1700 dollars less per student when compared to states such as Louisiana or West Virginia. [Source: Oregon PTA calculation based on data from the National Center on Education Statistics and the Council for Community and Economic Research]. These are states that we do not want to emulate when it comes to education funding, so spending less per student should be cause for concern.

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. As student enrollment has dropped and chronic absenteeism has risen, districts' cost per student have increased leaving limited financial room to invest in research-aligned, evidence-based interventions. Two independent groups of experts [Quality Education Commission and the American Institute for Research] have determined that Oregon needs to increase its school funding to achieve better outcomes for students.

My two children attend Portland Public Schools and every year we lose a few families because they are frustrated with the lack of funding, and thus the lack of resources to support their children, at our public school. Those who can afford it, switch to private schools, those that don't consider moving across the border in to Washington. If we want to see Oregon grow and thrive, we need to seriously invest in public education. Good schools draw families to our cities and towns. A quality education creates the future workforce we need and protects against some of our states current challenges - houselessness, substance use, etc.

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.