

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

Dear elected officials.

I am one of your constituents - I have a 2nd grader and Kindergartener in Portland Public Schools and school funding is critical to my family. I urge you to do the right thing.

In inflation-adjusted dollars, Oregon schools are still reeling from a \$500 million cut in funding in the 2023-25 biennium [Source: Quality Education Commission].

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.

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.

Adjusted for cost of living, Oregon is 31st in the nation for per-student-funding and Oregon spends \$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]. 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.

We all agree that investments in early literacy, summer learning, career technical education, fighting chronic absenteeism, improving accountability and more are needed. We gratefully welcome any specific input you have about programs or staff you believe should be cut from our schools to offset these investments?

But, two independent groups of experts [Quality Education Commission and the American Institute for Research] have determined that Oregon actually needs to increase its school funding to achieve better outcomes for students.

We 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.

We hope to see you soon at one of our district's public budget meetings to hear more about your plans to improve our schools within the limitations of the proposed state funding. We are happy to work with your office to add these meetings to your schedule.