

Submitter: Jeffrey Fuller  
On Behalf Of: Reynolds Education Association  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006

My name is Jeffrey Fuller. I am a full time Social Studies teacher at Reynolds High School and I am the president of the Reynolds Education Association. I am speaking in representation of over 650 educators who work in one of the state's most diverse, and unfortunately, disadvantaged districts in Oregon.

I am aware that OEA lobbyists have shared with you a need to increase the SPED cap as well as funds for high cost disability reimbursement. These things are sorely needed and with which I agree. But that is not why I am here.

What I really want to speak about is Governor Kotek's proposed \$11.36 billion education budget. While the chair of this committee and OEA leadership have repeatedly suggested this maintains services, the reality is that state funding at this level represents a cut for dozens of districts across the state in the first year of the biennium and even more in the second year.

The increased funding over the last biennium will be fully devoured in most districts by the PERS rollup. As such, COLAs, increased insurance costs, increased utilities costs, and more will be unfunded and will result in cutting programs and educators.

This will increase class size and caseloads and make the HB 3652 worthless. We cannot in good faith bargain for such things if there is no money available.

I know some of you have visited schools in the past several years and know well the difficulties educators face meeting student needs. Our students continue to come to us with sharply increased needs compared to before the pandemic.

Disrupted classrooms are far too often the norm. The disappearance of ESSER funds, and now the promise of decreased or eliminated federal funding and grants, makes maintaining the programs that were starting to make a difference impossible.

The American Institute for Research's report Understanding the Cost of Providing Adequate Educational Opportunity in Oregon, which informs the Quality Education Model, makes it clear that districts with an EDI that places them in the 5th quintile need an additional \$7,992 per student to meet the state's goals. In districts such as Reynolds, this leaves a funding gap of 46%. That's 46% below what the state believes is necessary to "reach adequacy." Not to excel. But to be merely adequate.

When we add in the governor's proposed accountability bill that works to hold

school's accountable for the state's refusal to meet students' socio-economic, medical, and community needs, the state's grossly inadequate funding appears both dishonest and underhanded.

The Oregon legislature's two and a half decades failure to fully fund the QEM has clearly had a negative impact on districts across the state. As noted in the spoken testimony today, that means the state has underfunded education by over \$22 billion in the last 25 years. This year's proposed funding level will add an additional \$2 billion to that historic underfunding.

It's not just class size and caseloads that are ballooned by these failures. It's also infrastructure.

Reynolds currently sits on over \$80 million of deferred maintenance. When you add in the mandatory costs of keeping our buildings even remotely functioning, our cuts to staff run even deeper. I would encourage everyone here to visit schools such as Glenfair Elementary and tell me how this is ok.

At the current funding level, I will be sitting down with district officials as we go through the process of cutting around 15% of our staff. This is not sustainable.

If this body does not find more money to fund schools at the QEM, which is just an "adequate" level, this budget will hurt students. That pain, as always, will be felt most succinctly by the most disadvantaged and historically marginalized students in the state. It will set Oregon education even further back than it currently stands.

It is well past time to fully fund Oregon schools.