

Chair, Members of the Committee—

I come before you today not just as a citizen, but as a parent, a neighbor, and a believer in the promise of Oregon. In these times—when the winds of division rage and our nation wrestles with the weight of culture wars—we in Oregon have a choice. We can shrink back, or we can rise. We can choose fear, or we can choose to lead.

And I say to you—we must lead.

We must lead by placing our children's education at the center of our priorities—not as a line item to be trimmed, but as an investment in the very soul of our state. We must stand firm in our support for our LGBTQ+ neighbors, for those living with disabilities, and for our veterans—because the measure of any society is how it treats its most vulnerable.

Let us not follow the careless example we are seeing at the federal level, where sweeping cuts fall like an indiscriminate axe. No, Oregon must be better. Oregon must be precise. Let us lean on the wisdom of our business leaders, our economists, our educators—those who know that there is a difference between cutting fat and cutting bone.

We must not sacrifice the future to balance the books of today. We must be, as we have always aspired to be, a beacon of hope in times that feel so bleak.

*Let this moment be remembered not for what we cut, but for what we chose to protect.*

*Sincerely,*

*Lee Freed*