

Submitter: Joseph Lechuga
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006

To the Joint Committee on Ways and Means,

My name is Joseph Lechuga. I teach at Reynolds Middle School in the Reynolds School District #7. I am a life-long Oregonian, and attended Oregon schools in Portland and Umatillah County.

A few years ago during winter, the roof of the gymnasium where I went to elementary school collapsed under the weight of snow that had accumulated. I tried looking up the exact date, and saw that Medford schools also had a roof collapse. We see something big happen like this and the next step is to see how we can fix the situation.

All across Oregon, we see these emergencies like this, though on a smaller scale. My building has seen broken doors and windows. There is a chronic leak in the library that has destroyed carpeting and ceiling tiles. The printer keeps jamming. All these things that add up, but are not worth the attention of Oregon's Congressional body. They have to get repaired, and the money has to come from somewhere.

Then there are the students. I teach at a Title I school. We have students that come from various backgrounds, but many of them share poverty as part of it. If you are not part of it, then it can be hard to see why a student in such a situation might not see the benefit in caring for their environs. Some students with a poverty background want to own something, this might mean that they want to be the only one that uses their classroom laptop. In the absence of being able to take it home, some students find that breaking the device ensures that they feel some ownership over it. Desks, textbooks, building resources, etc. They have to get repaired, and the money has to come from somewhere.

Two years ago, we had a teacher die in a traffic accident. The next year, the students of his class promoted to my grade-level (8th by the way). There had also been teachers that moved, quit, or resigned during that time. I had gotten to know some of the 7th graders, and they knew me. They new something about where they were going. This is not always something that my students know. Where are they going to live? Is their single parent's new friend a good person or a bad person? Providing them stability gives them a place where they can learn. Having their teachers be there, as expected, is part of that stability. Keeping teachers takes money, and that money has to come from somewhere.

I know that we all want to do best for all of Oregon's students. Come to Reynolds Middle School. We struggle on the budgetary limits we have. We are going to need more to keep going and do the best for our students. I hope that you can take that under consideration in getting funding to schools and districts like Reynolds and like Athena Elementary.

-Joseph Lechuga