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Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee

On Education Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5516

Our children deserve better!

I am writing to express my frustration over the lack of adequate funding for Oregon's public education system. As a retired school administrator, I keep a close eye on what is happening inside and outside the classrooms. The recent happenings in Salem concern me greatly. The \$11.36 billion is not enough for today's K to 12 education system. Our children deserve more.

Oregon's children are not doing well. In the 2024 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Oregon's fourth and eighth-grade students showed relatively low scores in reading and math, with Oregon's fourth-grade scores ranking 48th in math and 46th in reading, and eighth-grade scores ranking 38th in math and 31st in reading.

Although there are many factors that contributed to such low scores, lack of sufficient funding is by far the major reason. In the past four years, Oregon's school districts have been cutting their budget, and the most recent one is the worst.

The SSF allocation is **\$10.2 billion** for the 2023-2025 biennium and constitutes about 66.5 percent of the total money – from both state and local sources – distributed through the formula. There is usually a pretty significant gap between what the QEM calls for and the degree to which schools are funded. For example, in the 2019-21 biennium, the percentage difference between what the QEM called for and what the Legislature spent was 19.7%, or a \$1.7 billion difference. For the current two-year budget cycle, the 2023-25, the gap was 12.5% or \$1.46 billion.

The proposed education budget for 2025-2027 is \$11.36 billion which is not sufficient for the current needs of the students post COVID-19 interruption. The report by the American Institute of Research below has specified the needs for Oregon's children.

<https://www.air.org/project/evaluation-oregons-quality-education-model>

Oregon's children deserve a better education.

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