

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

To the members of the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education,

I am writing to express my concern regarding the proposed funding for the State School Fund at \$11.36 billion. While this represents an increase from the previous biennium, it falls short of meeting the critical needs of our schools. Portland Public Schools (PPS), for instance, faces a \$40 million budget shortfall for the 2025-26 school year, which will result in the reduction of 220 teaching and staff positions. This is a devastating blow to our educators, students, and the quality of education in our community.

Additionally, I urge you to address the inadequate funding for special education services. The current 11% cap on Special Education funding fails to meet the needs of students with physical, developmental, and learning disabilities, such as autism and dyslexia. These students deserve equitable access to education and the resources necessary to thrive. Without increased funding, schools like PPS will continue to struggle to provide the support these students require.

The continued budget cuts and shortfalls in PPS are also driving families to leave PPS schools, further destabilizing the district. Parents are left stressed and feeling compelled to fill the gap, whether through fundraising efforts, volunteering, or other means, which is neither sustainable nor equitable.

I respectfully request that you advocate for increased funding for both the State School Fund and special education services during this legislative session. Our children's education and future depend on it.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter. I look forward to seeing your leadership in ensuring that all students in our state receive the quality education they deserve.

Sincerely,

Aisha Gilmore
Oregon native and PPS parent