

Members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means,

My name is Brad Johnston, I am employed by the Jefferson County School District as a teacher as well as Central Oregon Community College as a Part Time Professor. I represent neither of them but am speaking on my own as a member of the Madras Education Association. I bring an additional perspective as someone who worked 25 years in law enforcement as well.

I know that your job is as difficult as they come. Your choices face real consequences, and your compromises affect real people in meaningful ways. Here are some things I know that worry me greatly.

We work in a district of high need. Every dollar matters. Our special education students, our students who live in poverty and in extremely difficult situations are the norm, not the exception. Education provides opportunities, it is the best investment to lower future spending on programs addressing homelessness, addiction, and criminality.

As the stepfather of high school athletes, it doesn't take long traveling to watch our daughters play to realize that our facilities, while adequate, pale in comparison to what many of their peers are growing up with. The distribution

of education funding must be improved to prioritize communities like ours.

I understand that the proposed funding is record level, however, I am also told that the increases are likely to be just enough to cover the expected increases in PERS liabilities. Unfortunately, we are living with the failure of previous legislatures to find sustainable funding for public retirement systems. Our school district is sending messages that we are looking at austerity measures and shrinking programs.

I encourage you and your fellow legislatures to find a way to:

1. Please pass House Bill 3652 expanding class loads as a mandatory subject of bargaining. Not all classes are equal.
 - 1.1. A class of 30 with no students on individual education plans or other mandatory supports needed is very different from a class of 20 with half of them on individual education plans and other requirements that require heavy modification of curriculum.
 - 1.2. There needs to be a more equitable way to distribute students and until the districts in the state are compelled to talk to teachers about the issue it will not improve.

2. In addition to passing House Bill 3652, finding a way to lift the cap on special education funding can make an immediate difference in districts statewide.
 - 2.1. Our Special Education numbers far exceed the 11% funding cap
 - 2.2. Despite not receiving adequate funding for these students, our moral and professional responsibilities remain.
 - 2.3. Local funds cannot make up the difference, we need state funding to meet our needs.

I thank you for making this effort to get out to communities and listen to us in our places. It means a lot in rural communities that don't often feel like their voice is heard. Your efforts are appreciated.