

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

Dear members of the Joint Ways & Means Committee, My name is Zachary Melzer, I am a resident, teacher, and father in the Parkrose School District. I also have the pleasure of representing our teachers and certified staff as our local union president. I am also the president of the East Multnomah County UNISERV council that represents our east county local educator unions in the Reynolds, Gresham-Barlow, Centennial, Parkrose, and Corbett school districts. I came to testify here at Mt. Hood Community College today to urge you to support lifting the 11% SPED cap and increasing the coverage of SPED high cost disability. Our district is small, with four elementary schools, a middle school, and a high school. We're like the more common rural districts all across Oregon but inside the Portland metro area. As such our total general fund is only 41 million for the most recent year. Of that 41 million, 9.1 million represents the money from that general fund we have to allocate for special education, around 25% of our general fund. Those 413 students or 15% of our student body who receive those funds, not 11%, the state only reimburses us to the tune of 4.5 million. If this was our only concern, it would already be enough to seriously hamper our district financially but it doesn't include the disparity we face with our high cost disability SPED students, 42 students of our total 413 SPED student population. Those 42 highest need students represent 2.7 million alone from our SPED pool, for them the state only gives us 21 cents for every dollar spent. Some students individually cost us \$230,000 a year. This is the barrier we face outside of QEM or any other revenue issues already happening across Oregon education. Our district is punished financially for fulfilling our duty and obligation taking care of our students who literally have the most need. This is not how Oregon should treat these kids. This is not the message legislators should be sending to families and the community about where their priorities are. Remove or raise the SPED cap and fully fund high cost disability. Thank you, Zachary Melzer