

## **Written Testimony in Support of HB 5006**

I'm writing in strong support of HB 5006 because I've seen firsthand how dedicated educators and school staff shape a child's future.

As a child, I struggled to learn how to read. I vividly remember the frustration of sitting in class, unable to make sense of the words in front of me. It wasn't until a brilliant and compassionate resource teacher worked with me one-on-one that things began to click. She gave me the tools—and the confidence—I needed to succeed. Without her, I would have continued to fall behind.

Thanks to that teacher, and many others who nurtured my love of learning, I graduated from college and eventually earned a Master's degree from Columbia University. These milestones were only possible because I had educators who understood that learning doesn't happen in isolation. It happens when students are supported, seen, and valued by teachers, aides, counselors, and staff who think critically and creatively about how to meet each child's needs.

Now, as a mother, I see that same kind of care and intentionality in my daughter's school. She is surrounded by devoted educators—PE teachers, music instructors, school counselors, resource staff—who don't just teach, but inspire. They create a safe, joyful space where she can thrive both academically and emotionally.

The budget cuts facing school districts across the state put all of this at risk. These cuts won't just reduce numbers on a spreadsheet—they will reduce the people our children rely on every day. Fewer staff means less individual attention, fewer support services, and a diminished ability to build the kinds of connections that research shows are essential to student success. We know that students who are not proficient in reading by third grade are four times more likely to drop out of high school. Early investments in teachers and support staff lead to long-term success—for students and for Oregon as a whole.

If we are truly committed to improving academic achievement, we must invest in the people who make that possible. I urge you to support HB 5006 to protect Oregon's students, educators, and future.