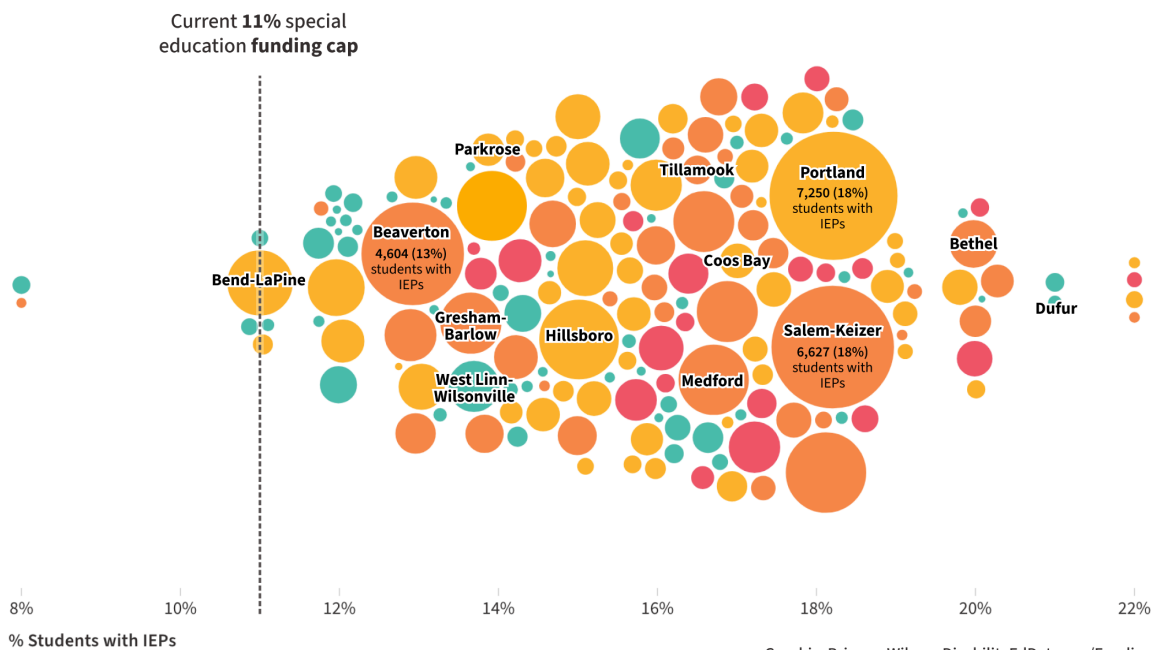


Dear Co-Chairs Lieber and Sanchez, and Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

I am testifying in support of HB 2953 to remove Oregon’s special education funding cap and HB 2448 to increase funding to the High Cost Disabilities Account.

Oregon’s current cap on special education funding was established in the early 90s and has remained unchanged. In the three decades since, medical advances have improved the health and lifespans of children with disabilities, experts have increased their understanding of neurodiversity and conditions, and evaluations have improved to identify students who need supports.

The 11% cap is arbitrary and bears no relation to the actual percentage of students now requiring special education services.



The financial burden this cap creates for districts is substantial. More concerning is that it may prevent some students from being evaluated and receiving the supports they need.

Oregon now stands as an outlier, with the lowest special education funding cap in the entire country, with only six other states even still maintaining one. Our neighboring state of Washington just voted unanimously in the House to fully remove theirs, as well as to increase funding weights for students with disabilities — recognizing this as a priority even amid budget uncertainties and constraints. As Washington Rep. Gerry Pollet put it, maintaining such a cap is “unconscionable and maybe unconstitutional.”

I have heard the arguments against removing the cap. There is no line of reasoning that has evidence to back it up. Meanwhile, the families, educators, administrators, and therapists who have to come together for any one IEP to be put in place know what an intensive and painstaking process it is. Meanwhile, districts are creating significant legal and financial liabilities for themselves by recognizing that far more than 11% of their students require supports. What is clear to all of us, is that every child deserves access to their education.

Sincerely,
Brianna Wilson Green